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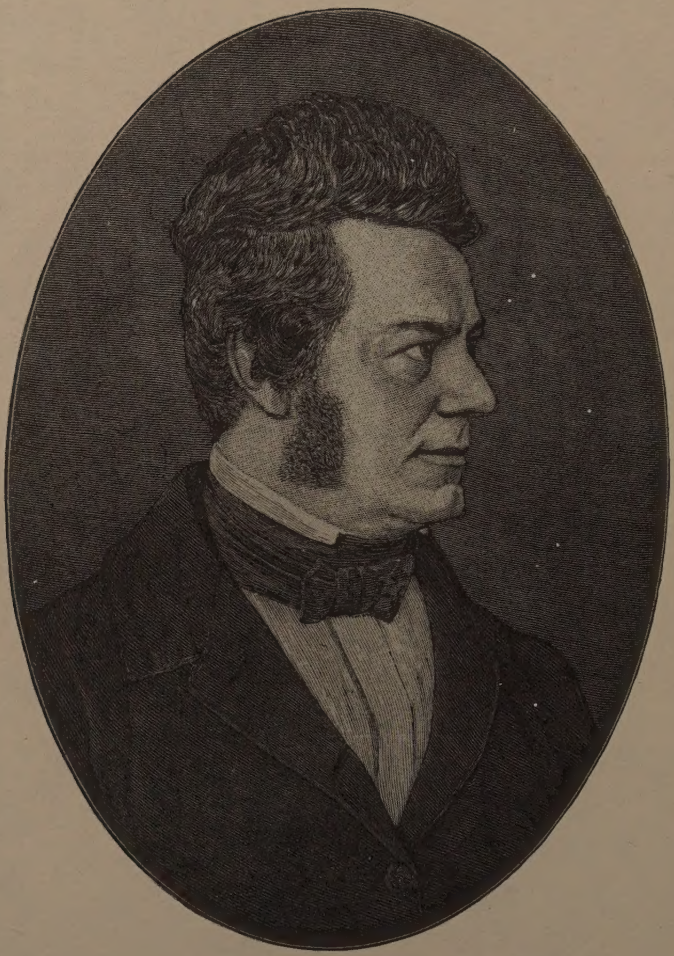
EDITED BY LAURENCE HUTTON



AMERICAN ACTOR SERIES

EDWIN FORREST

BY

LAWRENCE BARRETT

With Illustrations

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EDWIN FORREST.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

A SIMPLE record of the career of Edwin Forrest will be an instructive study to the men and women of his profession, and perhaps may prove pleasing to the reader for whom the details of the actor's life have interest. This record should be written while there are those living who can remember him at his first appearance, as well as at the close of his remarkable life, that errors of date may be corrected, and a fair and approved estimate of him may be given to posterity.

While it will not be necessary to exalt him as perfection, it will be impossible to deny that he had great and good impulses, and an aptitude for his calling beyond that of any other actor of his time. He was, moreover, essentially an American actor, — the first great one, — and his career has new and particular interest on that account.

Choosing his profession in early boyhood, Forrest achieved a great fame at an age when others were in the alphabet of their life-work. He passed through its

humble stages so rapidly, that the want of the training which only gradual and regular advancement can give was evident to the last in his performances. To read the words of loving friends and enthusiastic critics, published since his death, it would be supposed that his progress was made without rivalry or opposition. But this is not the fact. Edwin Forrest came upon the stage at a time when the drama in America was in the full tide of success, when every theatre in the larger cities could boast an excellent stock company. To have distanced such men as John R. Scott, David Ingersoll, Augustus Addams, Charles Eaton, Charles Webb, and James E. Murdoch, was a victory due as much to his personal character as to his merits as an actor. The annals of the stage will show that many of these men enjoyed a reputation equal, and in some cases superior, to that of Forrest. That he came to the front at last and left them all behind, is one of the glories of which his memory should not be deprived.

The condition of the actor at the time of the *début* of Edwin Forrest was singularly happy as well as singularly unfortunate. The lovers of the drama who filled the theatre when the old plays were presented could not show their regard for their favorites more effectually, so they imagined, than by inviting them to social meetings, where indulgence became the ruin of some of the brightest intellects of that day. Many had fallen about him, and with such examples Forrest had the strength and the wisdom to shape his course by a safer guide than that which his gifted fellows had so blindly chosen.

His more thoughtful admirers have pronounced his style entirely original, — a word so often misapplied in theatrical criticism that it has deceived many readers. If to be original means that the player must adopt an absolutely new style of acting, create new and hitherto unattempted, undreamed-of situations in the standard old plays, and present them in a shape unlike that in which they had previously been given, then there can be no such thing as an original actor. The so-called "business" of nearly all the commonly acted plays has been handed down through generations of actors, amended and corrected in many cases by each performer, but never radically changed. New readings of certain passages have been substituted for old, but the traditional "points" have been preserved; personal characteristics and physical peculiarities finding ample freedom of expression within the old rulings of each play. Styles of acting, too, have changed as little as the "business" of the drama.

There have been three methods of acting, and only three, upon the English stage since the restoration of Charles the Second, during whose reign the theatres were reopened in England after their long night of Puritanism. These have been illustrated in our own time by Forrest, Macready, and the elder Booth. Modifications of these styles have been seen; but the groundwork remains, which admits of space for individual freedom, but denies complete independence of the old forms. At times one style has prevailed, at others its rival; and the claim of originality which one generation of play-goers has set up for its favorite has

arisen from the misfortune which yields to the actor only the recollection of his work during the hour of its performance, so that he cannot fairly be judged by those who have not seen and known him on the stage. The generation that witnessed the advent of Edmund Kean knew not that his school was that of Garrick, dead then less than half a century. The method of Edwin Forrest, on the other hand, dates even farther back: through the Kembles to Betterton and Barton Booth, and perhaps to the same source through Cooper, with whom he played, and whose acting was undoubtedly that upon which his own style was based, for it was charged against him, in his early years, that he was a servile copyist of this great artist, — a statement as false and groundless as that of his entire originality.

A glance at the condition of the theatre at the time of Edwin Forrest's appearance will reveal how much he gained from those who preceded him, and how much he added to the splendor of the stage and its traditions. This will properly preface the story of his life.

The impulse given to the drama in America by the genius of the actors who crossed the Atlantic to our own shores at the close of the last century had not been exhausted when Forrest came upon the stage. Many of those artists, who had been educated in the best of the great English circuits, were veterans at this time; and the eager eyes of the young Forrest might nightly see such men as Maywood, Jefferson, Warren, and Wood in the regular stock, while such meteors as Cooper and Cooke occasionally flashed across the theatrical firmament. The character of the plays deter-

mined the style of the actor. All the traditions of the stage were in the possession of these gifted men and women, and Forrest could see his own beloved "Lear" acted in the original text, and with all the stage business, which had been handed down through generations of performers, perhaps direct from Richard Burbage, who had listened to the master himself in that dim old theatre which stood beside the Thames.

In Forrest's early days it was the fashion to admire the grand works of the old dramatists; and modern sensational plays were yet unborn. Each piece was cast to the full strength of the company, and no actor was considered too good for his part, however humble it might be. Each year brought the same order of plays, varied only by a revival, perhaps, of one of the less familiar old tragedies or comedies, such as "Every Man in his Humor" or "The Fatal Dowry." Thus the play-goer became acquainted not only with the manner of the old actors, but with the very text of the plays themselves. The best qualities of the drama in the mother-country had been transplanted to a fresher and more vigorous soil, and the harvest was reaped in a group of players unsurpassed for talent in any age of the theatre.

Although the accessories of the stage were still poor and mean, the audiences were recompensed by the genius of the actors, who could fire the imagination and eke out the illusion even in face of the many disadvantages by which they were surrounded. Mr. Forrest never fully escaped from the influences of that era. To the last he adhered to many of the prejudices then

formed, scorning all the appliances by which modern ingenuity has embellished the theatre. He was fond of referring to the days of Shakspere himself, when a bit of rudely painted canvas, stretched from side to side of the stage, upon which was scrawled, "This is a house," "This is a wood," represented the sum of the theatre's stock of scenery. He was wont to declare that in those blessed days it was absolutely necessary to be an *actor*, as no aid from without was known or dreamed of.

In one of his later travelling experiences he reached a small town where the stage appliances were beneath contempt, and where this theory of his might find a test. His manager feared to tell him how meagre were the scenes which must represent Elsinore; but as night approached he was forced, of course, to speak. He had hung two American flags at the stage openings, and these represented drop curtains as well as palace, platform, chamber, and castle. Instead of anger and annoyance, Forrest only smiled as he saw these preparations, and he declared that nothing could be better. He would show the audience that "Hamlet" could be played in that foreign frame with none of its powers shorn or weakened, while his own patriotism would stimulate his energies, as his eyes rested on the banners of his native land.

In enumerating the influences under which Edwin Forrest entered the theatre, we should not omit to name that which lay in the familiar good-fellowship of the old actors. They did not always put off with the garb the cheerfulness or the sociability of the character

they had lately been enacting. *Falstaff* often carried into private life the habits and characteristics of his stage existence, the line of identity and assumption not always being very clearly drawn.

Our young player, who had already tasted the delicious sweets of an amateur triumph, was able to learn from the gracious lips of older actors incidents of their bright lives, which opened now and then to his gaze a tempting vista down which his own future glory might be discerned. As so much of stage knowledge is conventional and unwritten, especially in the earlier and mechanical outlines, such an experience was of great value to the youth who was soon to appear as *Young Norval*, and create an impression so profound that the after-glories of the actor's life seemed poor beside that boyish success.

With a tender farewell to those heroes of the past whose example did so much to mould the early career of Edwin Forrest, we may now turn to the events of the life upon the threshold of which we have perhaps lingered too long.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY YOUTH.

EDWIN FORREST was born in the city of Philadelphia, March 9, 1806. His father, a Scotchman, had emigrated to this country during the last year of the preceding century. His calling was that of an importer of Scotch fabrics. He married, in 1795, Rebecca Lauman, a lady of German descent on both sides, but of American birth. Of this marriage seven children were born, the eldest of whom died in infancy. Of the six who lived to maturity, three were boys, three girls; and their names are here given in the order of their birth, — Lauman, Henrietta, William, Caroline, Edwin, Eleanora. Thus the subject of this memoir was the last of the sons, the youngest but one of the family. The father, William Forrest, having been unsuccessful in business, became a servant of the United States Bank, where he remained until the closing of that institution. He was then employed by Stephen Girard, in the Girard Bank, in which service he died in 1819, of consumption, aged sixty-two years. He had accumulated nothing in the way of worldly wealth, and left only his own good name as a legacy for his children. The burden of life and labor thus abruptly laid

down was at once taken up by the widow, who gave instant proof of her ability by the faithful support of her family under the trying conditions of poverty, and the affliction which his loss entailed. She was a woman of great strength of character, of unusual firmness, and, withal, of a loving, affectionate nature. Such mothers are always to be found at the starting-point of every great man's career. Opening a small shop, she soon succeeded in gaining sufficient income for their joint support, while she was thoughtful enough to place her growing boys in situations where they might aid in the task of providing for the fold. There were to be no drones in that hive, and the industry of the mother animated the spirits of the children. Our business lies with the youth whose name heads these pages. We leave the others, to follow Edwin Forrest. Our path will lead us back to them again, as we pass along, and we may dismiss them now.

Before the death of the father, and while actual want was still unknown in the unpretending home, the children were sent to school, and their future laid out by the wisdom of both parents. Edwin, like many others of his profession, was designed for the ministry, and as the lad early developed certain qualities which are supposed to point directly to that honorable pursuit, the choice of the parents seemed approved by Providence. Before the age of eleven, the future Channing had attracted admiring listeners by the music of his voice and by the aptness of his mimicry. Those qualities were developed chiefly in the repeating of such wise words as fell from the lips of his teacher and friend,

Father Pilmore, an eminent divine for whom Edwin Forrest entertained a lifelong reverence.

The boy's memory was remarkable. He could recite whole passages of his preceptor's sermons. Perched upon a chair or stool, crowned with the proud approval of family and friends, the young mimic filled the hearts of his listeners with fervent hope of his coming success in the fold of their beloved church. These hopes were destined to be met with disappointment. The bias of the future leader of the American stage was only faintly outlined as yet: his hour of development was still to come.

The anecdotes of his early years are meagre and uninteresting. We may be sure he did not escape the hard rubs with which boyhood prepares the ground for the struggles of manhood. We have reports of encounters wherein the victory was his, though not obtained without sanguinary marks of the conflict, showing how near defeat the conqueror had been. In the early wordy preliminaries of these bouts we hear of such expressions as would have shocked the Rev. Mr. Pilmore, and made the staid mother blush for her son's future; adjectives which, however they may emphasize passion, are still not pleasant to record. Edwin Forrest's youth was that of nearly all city lads whose parents are too poor to provide watchful guards over the companions of their children.

He must have learned early the road to the theatre, — permitted to go by the family, or going, perhaps, without the knowledge or consent of his seniors in the overworked household; for before he had passed his tenth year our young sermonizer and street champion

was a member of a juvenile Thespian club, and before eleven he had made his appearance at one of the regular theatres, in the *rôle* of a female. In the habiliments of the weaker sex, adorned for the play by unskilful hands, in such garments as could be collected hastily and secretly from several sources, which covered a figure always the reverse of feminine, and were worn in a manner far removed from the dainty grace belonging to such robes, our hero came from behind the scenes for his *début;* no doubt with a palpitation of heart suitable to his disguise, but in no other way belonging to his *rôle*. His reception was a shriek of laughter which drowned his efforts to speak. His grotesque appearance convulsed the audience, accustomed even to amateur atrocities of a kindred nature; and, after a vain attempt to arrange a hostile meeting with a boy in the pit whom he had especially observed as one of his most conspicuous critics, he was hustled ignominiously from the scene, to weep with rage over his defeat, and no doubt to attribute his failure to the unappreciative public, always the criminal in such cases. His first experience had taught him, at least, that his genius lay not in the line of feminine characters. He returned to the private station from which he had thus emerged considerably chagrined, and with deep regret that he had not "had it out" with his loud-voiced enemy in front of the stage.

His devotion to the drama was not permitted to interfere with his home duties. He had been regularly apprenticed successively to a printer, a cooper, and a ship-chandler before the age of thirteen; but we have no

record of his services, or the date of their continuance, in any of these unpoetical callings. We may be sure his happiness lay in the evasion of his work whenever he could steal a visit to the shrine where his beloved Thespis reigned supreme. He soon outgrew the ignominy of his first failure, and again and again sought to overcome the disgrace by a fresh appearance. To his appeals the irate manager lent a deaf ear; he had not forgotten the disaster of that eventful night, and did not desire to see it repeated. The sacred portals that led to the enchanted ground of the stage were closed against young Forrest, the warden being instructed not to let the importunate boy pass the door. At last, in desperation, he resolved to storm the citadel, to beat down the faithful guard, and to carry the war into the enemy's camp. One night he dashed past the astonished guardian of the stage entrance just as the curtain fell upon one of the acts of a play. He emerged before the footlights, eluding all pursuit, dressed as a harlequin; and before the audience had recovered from its astonishment at this scene not set down in the bills, the baffled, but not subdued, aspirant had delivered the lines of an epilogue in rhyme with so much effect that, before he could be seized by the astounded stage manager and hurled from the theatre, he had attracted public notice, successfully won his surprised audience, and not only secured immunity from punishment for his temerity, but actually gained that respect in the manager's estimation which he had so long and so vainly striven to acquire.

Forrest had made a reputation as a mimic among his fellows, before whom he was often called upon to show

his skill. He was especially noted for his recital of Goldsmith's epilogue, beginning, —

"Hold, Prompter, hold!"

These performances took place in a small barn or loft hastily improvised for the use of the lad and his companions. Edwin was regarded as the chief of this youthful histrionic band, not only on account of his superior ability, but because of his already powerful physique, and a certain awe which his manner inspired in the breasts of his associates. He knew more of the world than they, and was the envied possessor of an awful knowledge to which they could not pretend. He had seen the sacred domain of the theatre in all its mysterious glory, not only as an auditor, but as an actor as well. He had even stood erect in the presence of some of those great ones whose names adorned the play-bills, and were such marvels to the eyes of the young and the uninitiated. This is a period in the life of Forrest which nearly all boys reared in cities can recall; for who has not passed through the first awful but delicious mysteries of the play-bill, the theatre, the performance? Who has not, under the youthful roundabout, felt his heart stirred by the boyish associations of the drama?

The power to attract attention by his recitations meeting with encouragement in such humble surroundings, the young actor soon sought out opportunities on a larger platform and before more critical hearers. At a public exhibition of the effects of oxide gas he was asked by the exhibitor to become the medium of illustration. He consented eagerly. Under its effect he

dashed wildly into one of the soliloquies of "Richard the Third," and had wellnigh ranted the whole of the tent scene, until where *Richard*, alarmed by the shouts of his murdered victims, cries out, "Give me another horse; bind up my wounds," when, the effects of the gas passing suddenly away, the speaker awoke to find himself deafened by the plaudits of an audience which was surprised and delighted by the unexpected performance.

This incident made an impression upon the celebrated lawyer, John Swift, who at once took an interest in the lad, and was instrumental in shaping his career. By his aid Forrest was promised an appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, then one of the leading theatres of the country. Many difficulties had to be overcome before the efforts of Mr. Swift were successful. Wood and Warren, the veteran managers, had been unhappy in their *débutants*, none of whom had gained a permanent footing; but the kindly interest of his patron prevailed at last against the prejudices of the managers, and the opportunity to appear was offered. He selected *Young Norval*, in Home's tragedy of "Douglas," then the crucial test by which many a young beginner essayed the favor of an audience.

Supported by the kindness of two friends, — Mr. S. K. Levin, a liquor merchant, and Edwin A. Carpenter, a grocer, — he was enabled to receive some preliminary teaching in elocution from Lemuel G. White, a distinguished professor in that branch of the dramatic art. Mr. White had himself hoped to be an actor, but had failed on several occasions to secure an engagement. He was a devoted believer in the Garrick-Kean school,

— the natural school, so called, — as opposed to the declamatory or artificial method, of which the Kembles were the exponents in our century. James E. Murdoch, the most gifted elocutionist and the most charming high comedian of his day, and David Ingersoll, "the silver tongued," were among the noted scholars of this master.

The long-hoped-for night had come at last. All the hours which had led to this supreme one were over, and their anxieties and hopes put by, to make room for an event the greatest, so far, in the life of the youth of whom we are writing. The aid of friends, their support and encouragement, the teaching of White, the experience gained in all the good performances he had seen, in all the poor ones he had himself given, had only been preparatory to this auspicious night, — the 27th of November, 1820.

The theatre was filled by an audience eager to welcome a genius, but critical and severe to reprove impudent assumption. The future Master of the American Stage, then fourteen years of age, — a boy in years, a man in character, — announced as "A young Gentleman of this City," surrounded by a group of veteran actors who had for many years shared the favor of the public, began a career which was as auspicious at its opening as it was splendid in its maturity. White had characterized the lad as hobbledehoy on first seeing him, and felt doubtful of his success; but he gave no sign of awkwardness now, — the pupil was worthy of his master. At his entrance he won the vast audience at once by the grace of his figure, and the modest bearing which was natural to him. Something of that magnetism which he ex-

ercised so effectively in later years, now attracted all who heard him, and made friends even before he spoke. In the scenes of tenderness with his mother, his melting voice went to every heart, and won for him the tribute of tears; in the scenes of tumult and defiance his proud spirit soared to a surprising height, and the rapturous applause which followed testified to his power; and when the last dying exclamation of the so-long-orphaned *Norval* fell upon the ears of his mother, all the pent-up feelings of the assemblage gave way to a torrent of approbation, which called the blushing youth before the curtain, covered him with the glory of resounding cheers, and filled his heart with those glad sounds for which the actor lives and endures the trials of his lot.

William B. Wood, in his "Personal Recollections of the Stage," published in 1854, gives the cast of "Douglas" on this occasion in full. It is worthy of preservation here: —

Douglas (Young Norval)	Edwin Forrest.
Lord Randolph	Frederick Wheatley.
Glenalvon	William B. Wood.
Old Norval	William Warren.
Lady Randolph	Mrs. H. A. Williams.
Anna	Mrs. Joseph Jefferson.

Mrs. Williams is better remembered as Mrs. Robert Maywood; Frederick Wheatley was the father of William and Emma Wheatley (Mrs. Mason); William Warren was the father of William Warren, so well known in Boston to-day; and Mrs. Jefferson was the grandmother of the present Joseph Jefferson.

It seems incredible that Edwin Forrest was only four-

teen years old at this time. So much experience had been his, so much had been accomplished, that it appears more than likely that William Wood was right when he said that the *débutant* was "sixteen years of age." Even adding these disputed years to his life, we have a marvel of achievement without a parallel. He was yet to pass through a severe experience before gaining a fixed place upon the stage; but he had demonstrated his fitness, he had proved his claim to merit, and convinced his friends of the metal that was in him.

Still retaining his place in his shop, Forrest devoted his spare hours to study, under the advice and direction of wise friends. He was allowed to reappear, December 29th, as *Frederick*, in "Lovers' Vows," repeating his first success; and on the 8th of January, 1821, he benefited as *Octavian*, in "The Mountaineers," a play associated with the early glories of Edmund Kean. In this year, also, he made his first and only venture as a manager, boldly taking the Prune Street Theatre and giving a successful performance of *Richard the Third*, which not only pleased the audience, but brought him in a few dollars of profit. He made many attempts to secure a regular engagement in one of the Western circuits, where experience could be gained, and at last, after many denials, he was employed by Collins and Jones to play leading juvenile parts in their theatres in Pittsburg, Cincinnati, and Lexington. Thus, at the age of sixteen or eighteen, Edwin Forrest enrolled himself as a regular member of a theatrical company, and broke loose from trade forever.

Glancing back over this part of his life, we must stop to mark how persistent was the forward progress, how unfaltering the purpose, and how steady the stride towards fame and success of the young ship-chandler's apprentice. He had a good common-school education, nothing more; but a brave heart, an iron will, and impulses which struggled towards the highest in all his aims. He had already gained the friendship of such men as John Swift, and Alexander Wilson the celebrated ornithologist, who took a deep interest in the struggling lad, and gave him aid and encouragement. He had not permitted his bias for the theatre to interfere with the duty which bound him to do his share in providing for the family left destitute by his father's death. He was a good son to a noble mother, and a good brother to his other kin, while his soul chafed against the bars which shut him out from his true career, and tied him to the desk where his galling routine lay. His achievements were already of no mean order, as we have seen. He had laid the foundations of his future career with much sagacity, and gave every assurance that the boy would become the father of the man.

Although he had disappointed the fond anticipations of his mother, who had in fancy seen her beloved son in priest's orders, she must have found solace in the conviction that one who had so properly carried out the duties of a son must of necessity be guided towards the right, however wide of his parents' plans his career might be.

CHAPTER III.

THE STROLLER.

BIDDING farewell to home and family, to friends and companions, Edwin Forrest crossed the Alleghany Mountains to begin at Pittsburg, in October, 1822, the serious business of his life. His path, which hitherto had lain along pleasant places, was now to widen into that crowded thoroughfare where man jostles man in the struggle for the goal, and along which are strewn the bodies of the many who faint and fall by the way. His endowments were youth, good health, high spirits, and a superb physique, — qualities essential to success in any calling, but particularly so in the race for histrionic honors. He had seen the best models, he had sat at the feet of the greatest masters of his art then known in any land; he had tasted the sweets of popularity early, and had found savor therein. He was now to set out upon a new venture. The amateur had filled his cup of happiness with the admiration which is spontaneously given; he had gained thunders of applause for his unpaid labors, but was now to begin his work in earnest, and to toil for bread. He was destined to find his honors well earned ere they were gained, his bread dearly bought before it reached his lips.

The life of a strolling player in 1881 is not a comfortable one; in 1821 it must have been simply miserable vagabondage, where the stroller shared with the gypsy the shelter of the hedge, with the beggar sometimes the broken crust; where cuffs and stripes and sorrows were plenty, and God's sunny blessings few and far between. If we could look into the theatre in which Forrest's professional life began, we would see no such temple as that which testifies to the wealth, the culture, and the love of the drama shown in the Pittsburg of to-day. In 1822 the city must have confined its theatrical desires to a very humble abode for the Muse of Tragedy, — a dark and dingy place, full of holes and corners, where old shadows lurked, and where the ghosts of the old plays, so often laid, still walked and moved and had their shadowy being.

With a salary of eight dollars a week, Edwin Forrest began his regular stage life; opening in October, 1822, as *Young Norval* in "Douglas," that respectably dull, old versified story, which has long since passed into oblivion as an acting play, and is to be found only in the collections of the antiquarians of the stage. None of his companions at this period had won great fame, although many of them were excellent actors, and the company as a whole was more than commonly good, — one that would compare favorably in numbers and in merit with any of the travelling troupes of to-day. During the journey over the mountains, Forrest made the acquaintance of Simon Cameron, then a youth like himself, and formed a friendship which was resumed in later years, to last until the actor's death. This intimacy shows the

hold Forrest was beginning to take upon men of position and intelligence. Mutual attraction united them, mutual tastes held them together.

Of this brief Pittsburg season we know nothing, but we may surmise that it brought little profit to the management, for it soon came to an end. Forrest had played a varied list of parts, ranging from broad comedy to high tragedy, and in all of them had given signs of great promise. Leaving the Iron City, the little band embarked for Cincinnati, going by flat-boat down the Ohio River, — a journey we can imagine to have been made cheerful by the glad youthful spirits of the young actor and his companions, to whom the experiences were so new. Exhilarated by the influences of Nature, which in that region is always bountiful of her blessings, and enlivened by songs and glees and merry tales, repeated under the noonday sun of autumn as they drifted along, we may be sure that the hours passed swiftly and joyously by. Always a good *raconteur* and mimic, the present occasion brought out all the best resources of the young wanderer. Here he could freely indulge in that taste for comedy which always has been the passion of every tragedian in the opening of his career, and in the display of those comic powers that had been denied him before the foot-lights. Past fertile fields, by vine-clad slopes sunny with the lustre of the grape, halting at young clearings, the abode of the few who had come from the wilderness to lay the corner-stones of future cities on the placid bosom of the broad Ohio, this freight of happy souls bore onward, light-hearted, to their destination. Many a night when all

his companions were asleep, and all the laughter hushed, the lad who had so lately left his mother's side bethought him of that mother and of her teachings, and with tearful eyes and reverent heart he knelt in prayer for the welfare of that dear absent one, asking that her spirit might be with her wandering son in all his journeyings, and that her precepts might never be neglected or forgotten.

Reaching Maysville, Kentucky, after many days, the little band landed, and with their precious freight of baggage-properties, and such small shreds of scenery as they used to transport in those days when few theatres were decently provided, they found a temple waiting them not unlike that which they had left; but they were greeted by the warm Kentucky hearts and open generous hands for which the descendants of the pioneers of that State are still so famous. For five nights the company entertained their new patrons, Forrest making many friends the while, and then went to Lexington, — a broader field and more distinguished arena than any in which he had yet appeared. Lexington was then, as now, the capital centre of the State. An intelligent love of the drama has ever marked the people who live beyond the great rivers of the West. Leading as they do, during a large part of the year, an agricultural life, watching carefully their great landed interests, they find time nevertheless for reading and mental enjoyment and improvement, and great pleasure in their occasional visits to their cities and the theatres they contain. The drama has always been their chief delight, and when the theatre was poorly supported, even

in the larger and older cities of the East, the principal towns of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia, as well as those of the Carolinas, sustained liberally companies of a high order of excellence.

Before the beauty and intelligence of Lexington Edwin Forrest now appeared, and was met by a criticism discerning and refining, which ripened his perceptions, stimulated him, and opened up to him a new avenue in his work which had hitherto been closed. As has been shown, none of the theatres of that day were well furnished. It was deemed unnecessary to decorate the stage, and therefore with meagre appliances, in such poor robes as his poverty compelled him to wear, but with a soul within him which asked no favor of Fortune, Edwin Forrest entered upon his first important performances of the higher *rôles* of the standard drama. He followed tradition here, and took up the characters which must always have some feeling representative, so long as the taste for the grand old dramatists survives. He soon attracted the attention of one of the leading men of mind in the South, — President Holley, of the University near Lexington, — an able critic, a ripe scholar, a man of refined tastes, and an enthusiastic lover of the theatre, who gave Forrest good counsel that was of great service to him, and inspired him to renewed study of his profession. It was to this noble pioneer in the cause of education that Forrest was indebted for the advice which led him finally to abandon comedy, and to devote his time and attention to tragedy alone, to aim at lofty ideals in his private as well as in his public life, and to remember that the char-

acter of the man will ever color the work of the artist; supplementing these with other teachings for his advancement and improvement, that could only have come from a man so pure and lofty in spirit as was President Holley.

At last the happy season came to a close, the good-byes to Lexington were spoken, and the strollers once more set out for other scenes and fresh adventures. The ladies of the company rode in covered vans or carts, perched upon the scenery or the baggage; the gentlemen went on foot. Their destination was Cincinnati, then, as now, the Queen City of the West. This was the promised land of the wanderers, towards which all their steps had slowly tended, the end of all their journeyings.

In February, 1823, they opened at the Columbia Street Theatre, in "The Soldier's Daughter;" Forrest playing the very humble part of *Young Malfort*, a sad youth, the hero of the heavy sentiment, who is introduced to give weight and solemnity to a very charming comedy. This was Forrest's first appearance in Cincinnati, a city to which after many years he was to return in triumph, and recall with many a smile the events which we are now tracing. The description of one theatre in the early days of those Western cities will suffice for all. The state of the drama, its patronage, and the style of plays produced, were with trifling exceptions identical in all these places.

At this period in Forrest's career it may be said with certainty that the romance, if such it may be called, of his life as a stroller came to an end, and the actual prose

began. Travel and the novelty of new scenes and incidents had deadened the sense of suffering which accompanied the earlier struggles, and a refreshing sleep after a day of toil and denial was still the boon allowed to the wandering actor, in which some sweet dream of rich comfort, of luxurious home, would banish the stern reality of the day gone by, and fortify the soul against the labors of the day to come. These consolations, poor though they were, which had sprung from a light heart, entertained by the variety and ever-changing scenes of his late experiences, were now to end. The duties of the theatre grew more severe. A change of bill nightly necessitated fresh and increasing work; new parts demanded new wardrobes, or old garments patched and transformed; while particular lines of business and the exclusive claim to a certain range of characters gratifying to the performer were all swept away in the demands for what was felt to be the greatest good for the greatest number. The serious hero of the opening play was often the ballet-dancer of the after-piece, or the painted clown who sang a comic song between drama and farce. Doffing the plaid and the dirk of *Young Norval*, Edwin had even put on the many-colored garments of the Virginia negro, had given his audiences a break-down or a walk-around in true plantation style, before Daddy Rice, the great "Jim Crow," was known to the stage at all.

As a matter of curiosity, we give here portions of an advertisement from the *Cincinnati Independent Press*, dated July 17, 1823, showing Forrest's position on the stage at that time.

GLOBE THEATRE — THREE NEW PIECES.

The public are respectfully informed that the new petit comedy of "Dandyism; or, Modern Fashions," having been received with distinguished approbation, according to the wish of many citizens will be repeated. An original interlude, called "The Tailor in Distress; or, A Yankee Trick," will also be brought forward, and those two will be followed by the grand pantomimic spectacle of "Don Quixote," which has been in preparation for several weeks. The performance will positively begin at 10 minutes before 8, and close before 12 o'clock.

ON THIS EVENING, JULY 17,

will be presented (for the second and last time) the petit comedy of

DANDYISM; OR, MODERN FASHIONS.

MR. WILSON		Mr. Cargill.
FRANK FREELOVE		Davis.
BILL SHUFFLE	Two modern dandies.	Scott.
TOM TIPPLE		Forrest.
POST BOY, also TAILOR'S BOY		Miss Hanna.
CHARLOTTE		Mrs. Cargill.
BETTY BAB		Miss Riddle.
MRS. WILSON		Mrs. Hanna.

In Act III. — a Duel between the two dandies (Messrs. SCOTT and FORREST), in which will be introduced the most modern modes of shunning a bullet, viz. long dodging, short dodging, quick dodging, quizzical dodging, demi-quizzical dodging, and demi-semi-quizzical dodging, after the manner of Cumming and McDuffie, the heroes of the South.

After which an original interlude (founded on fact) called

THE TAILOR IN DISTRESS; OR, A YANKEE TRICK.

GENERAL	Mr. Cargill.
SNIP (a tailor of Paperopolis)	Eberle.

TOM (tailor's boy)	Miss Riddle.
CUFFEE (a Kentucky negro)	Mr. Forrest.
MISS PHILISY (a negro lady)	———

In the course of the interlude Mr. FORREST will give mock imitations of Mr. Phillips's singing.

The evening's entertainment to conclude with the grand heroic pantomime of

DON QUIXOTE,

with appropriate scenery, dresses, and music.

COUNT	Mr. Sweeny.
COUNTESS	Mrs. Riddle.
SANCHO PANZA (Don Quixote's squire)	Mr. Forrest.
CAPTAIN OF THE ROBBERS	———
SECOND CAPTAIN	Davis.
SUTLER WOMAN	Eberle.
DON QUIXOTE	Scott.
FIRST TRAVELLER	Cargill.
SECOND TRAVELLER	Giles.
FIRST MILLER	Lucas.
SECOND MILLER	George.
THIRD MILLER	Giles.

At this period Forrest's labors in the theatre were only equalled by his financial sufferings in private life. An accident to his only pair of shoes left him absolutely without a covering for his foot, which he bandaged as if wounded ; and limping about for several days he won much sympathy from his companions, who knew not that his distress was in his pocket. The welcome applause that rang in the ears of a *Damon* or a *Pythias* sometimes silenced the cries of hunger, warmed the almost naked body, and soothed the wounds of pride. But the little band could not live on the good-will of small audiences alone, and the crash, although long

deferred, came at last to this as to nearly all other theatrical ventures in that virgin field. Collins and Jones, depending upon weak characters in the absence of great ones, after a hard struggle finally succumbed, and the doors of the theatre were suddenly closed, throwing Forrest and his companions out of employment.

He had gained by this his first regular engagement some local fame, not a little valuable experience, and the friendship of a number of good men who saw promises of future excellence in the lad, and were not slow to encourage it. Among these the most valuable, perhaps, was the veteran General, afterwards President, Harrison. This gentle heart beat with pure pity as he heard the young stroller's stories of his trials; and his active friendship on many occasions lightened the burdens which the youth was carrying.

In the upper part of a barn in the city of Hamilton, all that was left of the wreck of the company of Collins and Jones met again to face another failure and another journey: this time to Lebanon, with the same sad experiences, and then to Dayton, disaster following disaster, where the union was finally and totally dissolved. Penniless, hungry, poorly clad, but hopeful still, Forrest started on foot for Cincinnati, a distance of forty miles. This was one of the severest trials of his life, and in most pathetic language he often alluded to it in after years. Adventures of a gypsy nature were not wanting by the way. He entered a stream, with his poor shoes in his hand, to help his way along by means of the row-boat he saw, apparently without an owner, lying temptingly unfastened on the opposite bank. But a

rough warning to be off, emphasized by the vision of a shot-gun pointing his way, led him to prefer the hard road to the perils of such navigation. At last he found himself once more in the Queen City of the West, poorer than ever, and with no prospect of a brighter future. Chance engagements, with a trifle of salary now and then to keep starvation from his door, a trip to Louisville with the wreck of the Cincinnati company, moderate success there, a return once more to Cincinnati under a new management and with a new enterprise, where at last permanent employment seemed assured, are among the incidents which followed that naked hegira from Dayton.

During these last months in Cincinnati Forrest played *Norval*, *Jaffier*, *George Barnwell*, and *Richard the Third*, besides certain parts in comedy. He was the mainstay of the company, the stock-star, its legitimate leader. In one year the amateur of Philadelphia, in spite of many disasters, became a power in the regular ranks of a Western theatre. This brief interval of success served only to keep the wolf from the door, but gave no margin of surplus, even if the young stroller had been of a saving character. The near and inevitable, the idle future, was still to be cared for. When July came, and with it the closing of the theatres, the strollers separated.

We may here speak of a friendship which, beginning under the shadow of mutual poverty, lasted and grew stronger and more dear under the sun of prosperity. To Mrs. Riddle and her family, actors like himself, Edwin Forrest owed in these dark days much of the hope and encouragement which brighten ad-

versity. Their courtesy and unfailing friendship were the ties which bound him to duty, and kept in his mind the example and precepts of his beloved mother and sisters. The Riddles had passed many years of honorable labor in their profession, had reached respectable positions, and out of their scanty earnings made Edwin feel at home in a circle where happy contentment helped to banish from the hearthstone the pangs of public neglect or private sorrows. To the end of his life, in fame and prosperity, the name of this early benefactress of his was a dear one to his ears, and he never ceased to speak fondly of her and of her memory. One cold winter's day, when the snow lay deep on the graves at Mount Auburn, the writer of these lines stood by Forrest's side as the last rites of the Church were performed over a member of this family, who in his early days had shown herself so kindly and thoroughly his friend. The strong man gazed into the last resting-place of her he had loved so well, and as the winter's sun fell upon that noble head, bared and reverent, the tears rolled unchecked from his eyes, unused to weep. Sweet memories of the happy past mingled with the sad thoughts that this, at last, was the final earthly parting.

The Riddle family had taken a plain cottage at Newport, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, opposite Cincinnati, and here in this enforced and penniless holiday time a place was made for Forrest. They gave him out of their scant store the help they could hardly spare, a bed, and, if nothing more, a kindly welcome; while a neighboring field often supplied the ear of corn,

which, roasted gypsy-like by the hedge-side fire, allayed the pangs of hunger, and brought to him forgetfulness of present misery.

Forrest had now reached the lowest point of his fortunes. Within the first year of his apprenticeship he had tasted the bitterness of hope deferred, the gall of unpaid toil, and suffered the hardest of all wants, the want of food. It is said that at this period, giving up all hope, the tortured, naked, hungry lad, in despair of a brighter day to come, madly dreamed of a sudden and violent end to all his misery. But with that elasticity which happily belongs to great souls destined for great achievements, he passed into a more hopeful and more cheerful mood, when the horizon of his vision became less dark and threatening. With book in hand, — a poorly bound volume of his beloved Shakspere, — he passed whole hours of many days beneath the trees of a neighboring farm, where, pondering over the immortal text, surrounded by all the influences which Nature exerts over sensitive minds, new plans, new purposes, took possession of him. He seemed to catch inspiring glimpses of the destiny that awaited him, and the elation that was born of those musings hallowed the spot to him forever. Looking out through the window of his present poverty into the future day of his splendid prosperity, he vowed that this ground should one day be his own, — an oath he religiously kept, for these very acres were many years after purchased by him, and during his life never passed out of his hands. The ground upon which the poor young stroller had snatched so many happy self-forgetting hours of study became

one of the most valued possessions of the successful tragedian, valued for its associations' sake if for nothing more.

While enjoying this hospitality of the Riddles, Forrest had succeeded in making an engagement for the following season with James H. Caldwell, then manager of the most prosperous of all the Southern or Western circuits. His salary was to be eighteen dollars a week, an advance upon his old wages that speaks well for the reputation he had already made; and he was to make his future headquarters at New Orleans, a city already the centre of all that was chivalrous and cultured in the South. At the last moment Forrest was so loath to part with his friends, made doubly dear to him by adversity and mutual tastes, that he would have been willing to have sacrificed even the brilliant opportunities offered to him in New Orleans, if his old friend and manager Sol Smith would have given him a place among his old companions of the West. This was firmly refused, however, Mr. Smith insisting that for his own best interests, as well as for the proper fulfilment of his word, he should go to his Southern engagement. In pique at this denial, full of wrath, and in order effectually to escape the sorrow involved in the parting from his friends, as well as to break with the manager who had a right to his services, and at the same time to affront the manager who had declined them, he joined a circus troupe, and gave surprising evidences of his agility in the ring. Fortune, however, having something better in store for him than the turning of somersaults on the sawdust of a travelling show, led him to listen

once more to the earnest advice of Mr. Smith, who pointed out to him all the advantages that lay before him in the South, appealed to his honor, always a safe and sure guide, and won his consent at last to go to his duty.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW ORLEANS. — NEW YORK. — HIS FIRST DECIDED SUCCESS.

DURING this journey South, over the great rivers, Forrest made the acquaintance of General Winfield Scott and John Howard Payne, in whose society the passage was made only too quickly, for on the 4th day of February, 1824, at the American Theatre, under the management of Caldwell, Forrest made his first bow to a New Orleans audience as *Jaffier* in "Venice Preserved," one of the tragedies of the old turgid school, which has vigor and vitality enough still to hold a sort of contested possession of the stage.

New Orleans at this time was the gayest capital in the country, and was alive with entertainments of all kinds. The season lasted from the close of the cotton-picking on the plantations until the coming of Lent. Rich planters with their families, when the crop was gathered, came to the Crescent City for their dissipation. The audience there, then as now, was made up largely of ladies, and their presence gave a refined air to the entertainment. A breathless and noiseless attention took the place of loud applause, and those points were best valued in the actor which were given without

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rant, and betrayed a delicate perception of nature in as delicate a form of art.

The influence of French taste was apparent on and off the stage, on the street, and in society. Caldwell was an actor of the impassioned school, a great favorite with the public he had served for many years, and much courted by society, where he shone with natural lustre. He presented Forrest to his new auditors, and the young man's fine figure, youthful presence, and noble voice made an instant impression; his open and frank bearing, which disdained criticism, removing somewhat the taint of provincialism which had early shown itself in the actor's robust style. This style could have been modified in the presence of so cultured and delicate an audience had Forrest submitted himself freely to its influence; but his career was here too stormy and too brief, his tastes too mature, to admit of the complete reform which might have taken place to his advantage.

His associates, if we may trust his biographers, were not of a character to purify his nature or refine his manners. While an awful curiosity hovers about the inventor who gave his name to the bowie-knife, it seems unreasonable to attach any great importance to the friendship of the man upon that ground alone. He may have had qualities mitigating the ferocity which characterized his many bloody contests at arms, but these are not dwelt upon, and the only advantage which Forrest ever reaped from this intimacy was the possession of the identical knife which had played so prominent a part in the hands of Colonel Bowie. At

least this is all the benefit which his biographers have shown as growing out of their friendship. At no time of Edwin Forrest's life did he need masculine or barbarian influence, — he always had a surplus in that direction, — and it would have been better for him could he have drawn his inspiration from the gentle and refining spirits which have ever animated the audiences and society of the Crescent City. He made his choice, and selected the coterie which was most congenial to him. We see in this no natural outcropping of a "Democratic" spirit; rather the haughty conceit of the self-made man who scorned to submit to judicious training. With Bowie, with a large-hearted, powerfully built, fighting steamboat captain (whose best exploit was not in conquering a crowd of loafers by his muscle, but in the tenderness of his care of Forrest when ill of the fever), with Push-ma-ta-ha, the Indian who is said to have suggested the production of "Metamora," and with other original spirits like these, Forrest passed his unoccupied time in New Orleans. They charmed the young athlete by their novel freedom, and he was too full of the warm blood of the barbarian himself to resist their fascination.

Of his professional progress here we have but poor accounts. He seems to have been very popular, and to have had an experience larger than he had heretofore enjoyed. He played with the elder Conway, and was affected by the grandeur of that actor's *Othello*, — a study which served Forrest well when in later years he inherited the character. This actor was in a degree associated with the days of Samuel Johnson, by the

preference which the widow of Thrale and the wife of Piozzi had shown him when he first appeared in London. He was a man of remarkable physical beauty, and the old lady became his ardent admirer. Her susceptibility created much amusement among her friends; but the association was valuable to Conway, as it brought him into public notice through the aid of a powerful literary clique. He drowned himself in Charleston Harbor during a temporary fit of insanity, in 1828.

Forrest's engagement with Caldwell had taken him to Petersburg, Norfolk, and Richmond, then back again to New Orleans. While at Richmond he attracted the attention and made the personal acquaintance of the venerable Chief Justice Marshall. He saw the patriot Lafayette, then revisiting the scenes of his impulsive and ardent youth, and receiving the warm welcome which was everywhere paid to him. Forrest returned to New Orleans in 1825, reopening as *Young Malfort*, in the "Soldier's Daughter," a part which seemed to have fastened to him, he played it so often, even when engaged for better things. In March he supported Conway, playing *Iago*. In May he announced for his benefit "King Lear." The performance was postponed on account of the weather, and when it did take place he gave "The Mountaineers" instead of the Shaksperean tragedy. The season closed at the end of May. During this latter month he had given his first performance of *Brutus*, in Howard Payne's drama, a part in which he became famous in after years, given up only when his strength and agility were failing him.

A quarrel with his manager, who seems to have envied

his success with the public, or so Forrest believed; his first serious love affair; and an attack of yellow fever of which he nearly died, and from which he was rescued by the care of his friend Graham, the steamboat captain,—are the leading incidents of his later New Orleans career. Jane Placide, who inspired the first love of Edwin Forrest, combined talent, beauty, and goodness. Her name was an honorable one, and the affection with which she filled the young actor's heart might have proved the blessed experience of his life, could she have returned it. Her character would have softened the asperities of his, and led him by a calmer path to those grand elevations towards which Providence had directed his footsteps. Baffled in his love, and believing Caldwell to be his rival and enemy, he challenged him, but was rebuked by the silent contempt of his manager, whom the impulsive and disappointed lover "posted." He then betook himself to the wigwam of his Indian friend, where, in commune with a nature new and fascinating, he sought solace for his disappointment. In the study of his model for "Metamora" he learned to forget the pangs of his refusal, and Push-ma-ta-ha by the wigwam fire consoled his pale-faced friend with the history of his own wild loves.

Returning to New Orleans in August, as poor as when he left it, Forrest secured a passage in a sailing ship for New York, was nearly caught in the teeth of a shark while bathing in the Gulf, but escaped miraculously, and arrived home at last after an absence of three years of enough drudgery and adventure to fill a life, and with a varied experience which colored his

whole career. He had not forgotten his home in his absence. He had sent to the dear ones from time to time such sums as he could spare from his little store; and he found them now all joy, eagerly expectant to see and to welcome him whose fame had already reached the humble dwelling and filled the widowed mother's heart with pride.

The hard novitiate of Edwin Forrest was now drawing near its close. Securing a stock engagement with Charles Gilfert, manager of the Albany Theatre, he opened there in the early fall, and played for the first time with Edmund Kean, then on his second visit to this country. The meeting with this extraordinary man, and the attentions he received from him, were among the directing influences of Forrest's life. To his last hour he never wearied of singing the praises of Kean, whose genius filled the English-speaking world with admiration. Two men more unlike in mind and body can scarcely be imagined. Kean, who had come up from his early sufferings into that prosperity which crazed him, bore upon his delicate frame the marks of the struggle. The fire of genius still dwelt in that eye which could melt with tenderness in the passion of *Romeo*, or flash with the lurid fires of jealousy as the "dusky Moor." He had passed over the soil yet virgin to his young admirer, and he bore the sad marks of his bitter travail. Transformed from the certain misery of a provincial career whose rewards were beggarly into the dazzling glory of a London triumph, Kean spanned at one bound the interval which separates luxury from want, wealth from poverty. But he

was more true to his earlier instincts than sensitive to his later possibilities. The spark which filled the stage with its divine radiance consumed the frame which emitted it, and he who swayed admiring audiences by his sublime powers became at last the victim of passions too late subjected to restraint. The early life of Edmund Kean, passed in the midst of social prejudices which outlawed the player, was the last sad and awful protest against the injustice and ignorance of an era which placed the genius of the actor among the glories of mankind, while the man himself was socially neglected and contemned.

Until now Forrest had seen no actor who represented in perfection the impassioned school of which Kean was the master. He had known Cooke in the decline of his powers, but his own judgment was immature. Here was indeed a revelation. How must his mind have grown in the study of that style which grasped the innermost of the passions and flashed out its expression with the spark divine, through a frame slender but magnetic. In later life Forrest loved to recall those impressions, and a lock of the great actor's hair was tenderly preserved amongst his most valued treasures. He played *Iago* to his *Othello*, *Titus* to his *Brutus*, and *Richmond* to his *Richard III.* The season at Albany ended in disaster: the actor's wardrobe was in pawn; but he went to Philadelphia to play for his old friend Porter's benefit, and his return to his native city was made happy by the success of his performance of *Jaffier* on this occasion. He was called upon to repeat it, and for two nights he tasted the first sweets of

his coming starring glories. His last hours of slavery, which we will briefly notice, were now at hand. Gilfert had assumed the management of the Bowery Theatre, New York, under the board of directors with Prosper M. Wetmore at their head, who were building that now venerable edifice. Forrest was engaged for one year, at a salary of twenty-eight dollars per week.

In the interval which preceded the opening of the theatre, Forrest appeared at the Park, for the benefit of Woodhull, playing *Othello*. He made a pronounced success, his old manager, sitting in front, profanely exclaiming, "By God, the boy has made a hit!" This was a great event, as the Park was then the leading theatre of America, and its actors the most exclusive and estimable. He played a few nights also at Baltimore and Washington, and again passed a short time with his beloved mother, to whose careful love and sterling character he owed so much, and towards whom his filial love was constant to the end.

He opened at the Bowery Theatre in November, 1826, as *Othello*, and made a brilliant impression. His salary was raised at once from twenty-eight dollars to forty dollars per week. From this success may be traced the first absolute hold made by Edwin Forrest upon the attention of cultivated auditors and intelligent critics. The "Bowery" was then a very different theatre from what it afterwards became, when the newsboys took forcible possession of its pit and the fire laddies were the arbiters of public taste in its neighborhood. The royal days of Eddy and the large-footed, loud-voiced tragedians were yet to come. The suc-

cessors of Hamblin were of a melodramatic school which would have caused the great tragedian to smile. Forrest's success was the beginning of a metropolitan reputation which extended over forty years of service. It was here he gained the friendship of those men, eminent in that day as the leaders of public opinion in theatrical affairs, the journalists and writers whose kindly but well-digested opinions aided him in fixing his conceptions and perfecting his style. To James Lawson and Leggett, of the *Post*, he owed a debt which he afterwards paid with interest. A pleasant instance of Forrest's moral integrity may be told here. He had been approached by a rival manager, after his first success, and urged to secede from the "Bowery" and join the other house at a much larger salary. He scornfully refused to break his word, although his own interests must suffer.

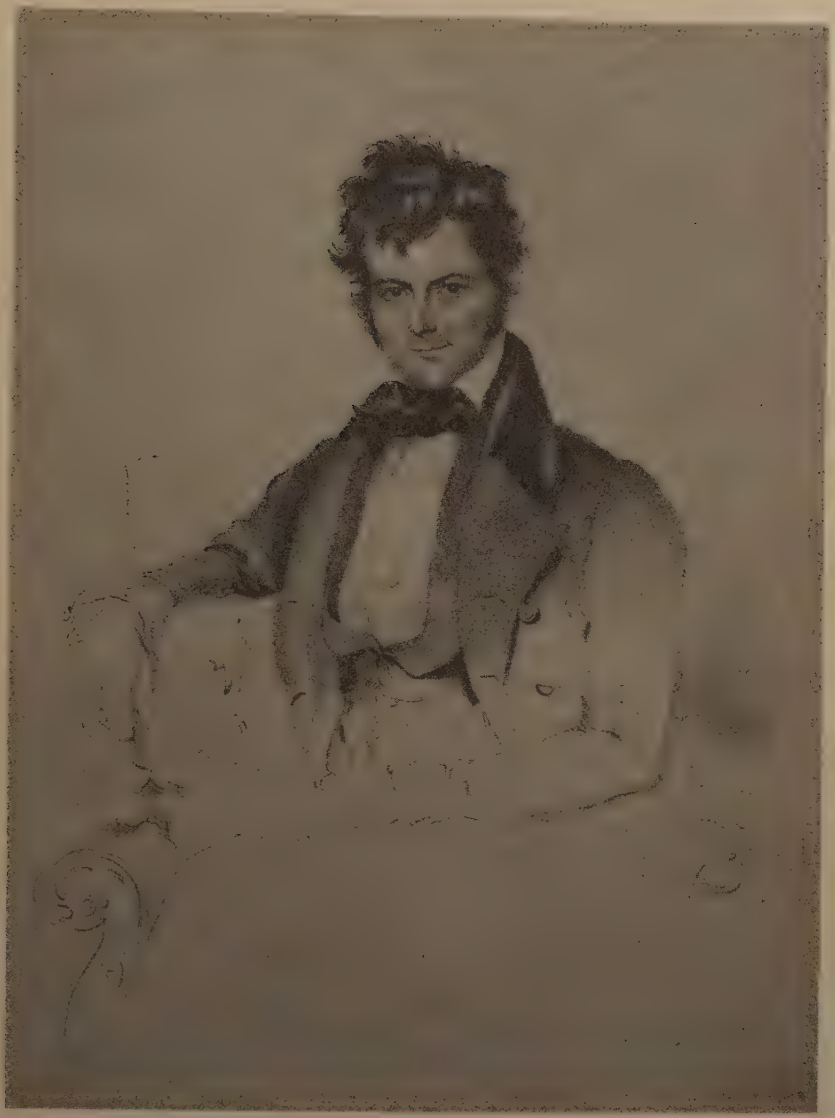
His popularity at this time was so great that he was often loaned to the other theatres by Gilfert, who demanded two hundred dollars a night for his services, while paying Forrest only forty dollars a week. When his contract for the season had expired, and Gilfert approached him for a renewal for another year, he replied that he would willingly remain for the valuation which Gilfert himself had placed upon him. He was instantly engaged for eighty nights, at a salary of two hundred dollars a night. This virtually closed his stock career, and was the first great advance he had made towards that giddy height from which he could not now be kept back. From the unfavorable surroundings of his early life, from the hard school of

adversity, Forrest had already emerged, and was moving surely towards the grand development of his great powers, forming his style upon the best models of the robust school which Cooper and Conway had brought over from the Kembles, modified and softened by the acting of Edmund Kean, who had flashed so lately like a meteor across his startled vision.

CHAPTER V.

HIS VISITS TO EUROPE.

EDWIN FORREST, according to his biographers, had just passed his twenty-first birthday. He was entering thus early upon a career such as few actors had ever known. His health was excellent, his vigor unimpaired by excesses, and he might have posed for one of the Olympian victors, so remarkable was his physique. His open, frank nature was as yet unwarped by injustice and malignity, still unspoiled by souring adversities or sickened by satiety. He was admirably suited to carry onward the traditions of the stage as they descended to him; and he was destined to be their best exponent in the coming years. At one bound he seemed to overleap all barriers; and he not only vaulted to a high position early in life, but never once fell backward. His rivals, on the other hand, were ascending by more toilsome grades the heights, at the top of which they beheld him who had so miraculously surmounted them all. He had passed through his theatrical drudgery in a few brief years, — endured in agony, but remembered with satisfaction. In that early day of the American theatre the actor was not only received with applause behind the footlights, but



was an object of admiring curiosity in private life. He shared with other public characters that most trying of all ordeals, the praise of the street, the openly uttered tribute of the passer-by. That such influences are to-day much modified is well for the actor, since they undoubtedly affected the bearing of Forrest and other players of his time, giving them the air of being always on parade before, as well as behind, the scenes. The writer can remember when the presence of Forrest upon Broadway attracted marked attention from friend and foe, and led to a free exchange of opinions upon his appearance, expressions of admiration or condemnation being as vigorously offered as if in the theatre itself.

Like all men who succeed in the pursuit of a difficult profession, he met with violent opposition, — the more violent in his case, because his advance had been so rapid and uninterrupted, and his upward course so steadily pursued, that rivalry was baffled by his industry. Denying himself now the indulgences which were the ruin of his fellows, he did not share their convivial hours, but shunned the paths in which they were blindly travelling. We can find him at this period of his life devoting himself to every research which tends to the elevation and improvement of the mind. He eagerly studied books and men, and gained, by application and self-denial, that precedence which he never lost. If ever a man owed all he had acquired to the theatre, it was Edwin Forrest. He was its child; within its walls all his experience of life had been gained, and through its literature his mind had acquired almost the only growth it ever knew.

The retirement of Cooper left the stage to a band of actors formed upon his style. Their names have long since been forgotten; but in absolute fitness for their profession, in all the requirements for the characters which each adopted, these early rivals of Forrest in his starring career were foemen worthy of his steel, — his equals in all things save constancy of will and fixedness of purpose. From what is known to us of Augustus Addams, he must have been an actor of uncommon force. He was the idol of his audiences, and held an equal place with Forrest for a time in the estimation of play-goers. With a fine and graceful physique, a voice of great sweetness and power, and a keen comprehension of character, he made a great impression in such heroic parts as *Damon*, *Virginius*, and *Pierre*. He died at an age when his powers should have been in their prime, a victim of that influence with which a public so often suffocates, while embracing, its idol, — popular applause. He was one of the greatest of Forrest's competitors.

Another rival was John R. Scott, who displayed such power that it was said of him by *The Times*, when he appeared in London, that no actor possessing so many beauties and so many faults had ever been seen upon the English stage. Had he been true to himself, he would undoubtedly have sternly contested the palm of superiority with Forrest. To the actors of to-day, educated in the modern sensational dramas, the splendor of this company of tragedians seems unreal. The list is too long for classification. It embraces Ingersoll, "the silver-tongued," whose early manhood was

the springtime of a glorious harvest destined never to ripen ; Charles Webb, Charles Eaton, and a long array of noble names, which are now only to be found upon tombstones, too early erected over their golden promise. That they did not hold out to the end is a sad reflection, — they were so gifted, so generous, and might have done so much for an art which repays industry so liberally. He only reached the goal who had avoided their errors and profited by their example.

The success which had greeted Forrest on his first appearance in New York was renewed in every city in the land. In Boston, where the people are proverbially slow to admit new candidates to their regard, he sprang into favor at once ; and he writes to his mother in great glee at having gained a reputation in "the Modern Athens." Fortune attended fame, and filled his pockets as the breath of adulation filled his heart. Generous and open in all things else, he was yet cautious in his money affairs, and soon laid aside a sum with which to purchase a home for his beloved mother and sisters. When he had paid the last penny of debt left by his father, and had seen the shelter raised over the head of his living family, he rejoiced in the goodness of that Providence which had led him by so many thorny paths into the road where roses bloomed and the laurel grew. In every city he began now to make valuable friends, of a class whose culture and experience aided his studies, while they stimulated his pride. Here was inaugurated that friendship with James Oakes, which only ceased when the grave closed over the lifeless clay of Forrest ; while with Barry Taylor, of Kentucky, he

formed a friendship which was at all times an inspiration and a delight.

With a patriotic love for all things American, Forrest formed a plan for the encouragement or development of an American drama, which resulted in heavy money losses to himself, but produced such contributions to our stage literature as the "Gladiator," "Jack Cade," and "Metamora." He was laughed at for his pains, and his outlay in money was the penalty he paid for his generous belief in the ability of his countrymen to create a drama that was to be purely national.

After five years of constant labor he felt that he had earned the right to a holiday, and he formed his plans for a two years' absence in Europe. His fame had preceded him: he had several offers to appear professionally; but he was determined that study and observation should be his only employment in the Old World. A farewell banquet was tendered him by the citizens of New York, and a brilliant assemblage gathered to speak the words of cheer and *bon voyage*, and give the young actor a substantial proof of the loving estimation in which he was held by his countrymen. A medal was struck in honor of the occasion. Bryant, Halleck, Leggett, Ingraham, and other distinguished men were present. The affair was a gratifying one, and an honor which had never before been paid to an American actor.

In July, 1834, he sailed in the good ship "Sully" for Europe, bidding farewell to the land of his birth, which had given him fame and fortune, and for which he entertained a Roman's love of country. Landing at Havre, he went directly to Paris, to enjoy the wonders

of that glittering capital, so dazzling to the traveller who looks upon her for the first time that all the senses are lost in that of admiration. Louis Philippe, the Citizen King, was on the throne, and to him the young Democrat was presented, standing somewhat reluctantly in a deferential attitude before a royalty which in his heart he despised. His only royalties were those of God's creating, — genius and endeavor. Upon the tomb of Talma he laid a laurel wreath, feeling sincere reverence for the man who had ennobled his calling, and who, while sharing the close friendship of the great Napoleon, to whom he had shown kindness when kindness was rare to that child of Destiny, refused to accept any favor at his hands in his hours of triumph. Among those who stood at the brilliant receptions at the Tuileries, dukes and marshals, princes and queens, the dignified form of Talma could be seen honored by the smile of him before whose few gifts nobility cringed and genius degraded itself. Forrest admired Mademoiselle Mars as the first real *comédienne* he had seen, and even in the awkward display of an amateur *conservatoire* performance he detected the genius which afterwards dazzled the world in the person of Rachel. Passing on through Italy, across the Alps, he stood beside the gate of Altorf; he climbed the peaks immortalized by Tell, and there, amid the solitudes where Swiss liberty was born, he shouted with wild pleasure the lines which Knowles has put in that hero's mouth: —

> "Ye crags and peaks, I 'm with ye once again,
> I call to you, with all my voice; I hold
> To you the hands you first beheld, to show
> They still are free."

Actors are usually dreamers, and how must Forrest have enjoyed his realization of all his early visions and ambitions, as he saw the scenes through which he had passed in mimic life. No tourist ever visits the wonders of the Old World with the same childish delight which fills the actor's soul who sees them for the first time. With every spot the name of Shakspere is associated, some incident or line suggesting his presence in those sacred scenes. To stand in Venice and recall the words of the Moor; to fancy he can see here the footprints of that hero, beside whose imaginative glory the actual deeds of a Dandolo or a Foscari pale into insignificance; to cross the bridge whereon Antonio had "many a time and oft" rated old Shylock "about his moneys and his usances," — this is to find among those scenes, beside those wave-washed palaces, such realities as history cannot furnish. Contrasting his present place and future hopes with those to which in his youth he seemed destined, Forrest must have felt a rising in the throat which choked all utterance.

He went to Poland and to Moscow; to Constantinople, the wretched remains of the proudest empire ever built upon the miseries of mankind; across the Euxine into Asia Minor; to Africa; to Naples, visiting the tomb of Juliet; and at last he set his foot upon the motherland, that shore inlaid with the mosaic of poetry and history, consecrated to all that is grand in the past of that race from which we draw our language, our glory, and the basis of our laws, the land of Shakspere, the birthplace of our drama, the nursery of Burbage, of Betterton, of Garrick, Macready, Kean, and all the

Kembles, the green fields, the smiling villages, the historic associations, all clustered around the magic name, England.

Here he found himself surrounded by many friends awaiting to do him honor and urging him to act. He yielded so far to this pressure as to consent to return at once from America, to which he must now depart. He had been absent two years when he landed in New York, early in September, 1836. He was welcomed by his many admirers with all the enthusiasm of friendship, and he arranged to play two engagements during the brief stay he was to make before his return to London.

His reappearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, in September, was the occasion of an ovation in every respect. Hundreds were turned away from the doors, and the neighborhood of the theatre was thronged with those who had failed to gain admittance. He played *Damon*, and, on his entrance, a demonstration took place unusual even in a theatre, where applause is so common. Men rose to their feet and cheered, ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and it was some minutes before the tumult of welcome subsided and the play was allowed to proceed. His speech at the close evoked fresh enthusiasm. He gave six performances only on this occasion, and each saw a repetition of the scene at the beginning of the engagement. The receipts were the largest ever known in that theatre. His return to his native city under such circumstances, and the rapturous welcome given him, where those he loved could share in his pride, touched him deeply. He

bade farewell to New York in six performances, immediately following those given in Philadelphia, and his reception in that city was equally flattering. The scenes at the doors were repeated, while the enthusiasm of the audience seemed to pass all bounds. He played "Othello," "Lear," "Damon and Pythias," "Hamlet," "Rolla," "Metamora," and "Virginius," and was supported by such artists as John H. Clarke (as *Iago*), John Mason (as *Macduff*), Peter Richings (as *King Claudius*), Henry Placide (as *Polonius*), William H. Chippendale (as the *Grave-digger*), W. S. Fredericks (as *Kent*), Mrs. Sharpe (as *Emelia* and *Ophelia*), Mrs. Richardson (as *Desdemona*), and Miss Charlotte Cushman (as *Queen Gertrude* and *Goneril*). He was paid five hundred dollars per night, and the receipts were about fifteen hundred dollars, which left a large margin of profit to the delighted manager of the Park.

On the 19th of September, 1836, Forrest embarked once more for the mother-country, this time with serious purpose. After a speedy and uneventful passage he reached England, and at once set about the preliminary business of his British engagement, which began October 17, 1836. He was the first really great American actor who had appeared in London as a rival of the English tragedians; for Cooper was born in England, though always regarded as belonging to the younger country.

A brief summary only will be given here of this engagement; it will again be touched upon when we come to speak of other performances in Great Britain, and the incidents which grew out of them at home and abroad.

His opening part was *Spartacus*, in the "Gladiator." The play was condemned, the actor applauded. In spite of the special fitness which he showed for this character, he was not able to make it acceptable to the English public. They acknowledged the vigor of his style, the ruggedness of his methods, and appreciated all the magnetic qualities of the man; but it was in his Shaksperean performances that they recognized and confessed his fitness to take the place of their own great actors. In *Othello*, in *Lear*, and in *Macbeth* he won instant fame. The audience gave their applause spontaneously, and the press generally spoke in his favor. The part of *Damon*, however, was declared to be beneath his powers.

He began his engagement October 17, and closed December 19, having acted *Macbeth* seven times, *Othello* nine, and *King Lear* eight.

The cast of the "Gladiator," at Drury Lane, October 17, 1836, on the night of Mr. Forrest's first appearance in England, is worthy of preservation. It is not to be found in any of the more extended biographies of the actor.

Marcus Lucinius Crassus	Mr. Warde.
Gellius	Mr. F. Cooke.
Lentulus	Mr. Hooper.
Jorius	Mr. Bartley.
Bracchius	Mr. Matthews.
Florus	Mr. Brindal.
Spartacus	Mr. E. Forrest.
Phasarius	Mr. Cooper.
Enomais	Mr. Baker.
Crixus	Mr. Duruset.

MUMMIUS	Mr. Mears.
SCROPHA	Mr. Honner.
BOY	Miss Marshall.
CENTURION	T. Matthews.
JULIA (her first appearance)	Mrs. Hooper.
SENONA (her first appearance in five years)	Miss Huddart.

Of this occasion the London *Times*, October 18, 1836, wrote: —

"DRURY LANE THEATRE. — Mr. Edwin Forrest, who has established a high reputation in America, his native country, as a tragedian, appeared for the first time before an English audience at this theatre last night. The character selected for his *début* was that of *Spartacus*, in the tragedy of that title, written by Mr. Bird, also an American. Mr. Forrest was received with hearty warmth, which from the first moment of his appearance left no doubt, if any could have been entertained, that the audience were well disposed to accept his exertions for their entertainment. He is a tall, rather robust man, of some thirty years of age, not remarkably handsome, but with expressive features and that cast of countenance which is well suited for theatrical effect. His voice is remarkably powerful, his figure rather vigorous than elegant, and his general appearance prepossessing. The subject of the tragedy is one admirably adapted for scenic representation, and has already been essayed in the French and German theatres. . . . The latter part of the play is less vigorous than the former; but there are some scenes of stirring interest, in which Mr. Forrest made a powerful impression on the audience. The poetry of the drama is rather powerful than polished; and although it contains some passages of considerable beauty, it is more generally characterized by a rough, passionate strain, in which gracefulness is sacrificed to force. One speech in which *Spartacus* describes the beauty of his Thracian valleys

☞ First Appearance of the celebrated

Mr. EDWIN FORREST,

THE EMINENT AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN.

Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

This Evening, MONDAY, October 17th, 1836,

Their Majesties' Servants will perform (1st Time on the English Stage) a Tragedy in Five Acts, entitled

THE GLADIATOR

With New Scenery (by the **Messrs. GRIEVE**), *New Dresses, and Decorations.*

Marcus Crassus, (*Urban Prætor*) **Mr. WARDE,**

Gellius, (*Consul*) **Mr. F. COOKE.** **Lentulus, Mr. HOOPER,**

Jovius, (*a Centurion*) **Mr. BARTLEY,**

Braechius, Mr. MATHEWS, **Florus, Mr. BRINDAL,**

Spartacus, - - - - Mr. EDWIN FORREST,

Who will have the honor, on this occasion, of making his First Appearance on the British Stage

Phasarius, (*Brother to Spartacus*) **Mr. COOPER,**

Œnomaus, Mr. BAKER, **Crixus, Mr. DURUSET,**

Mummius, Mr. MEARS, **Scropha, Mr. HONNER,**

Boy, Miss MARSHALL, **Centurion, Mr. T. MATTHEWS.**

Julia, (*Niece to Crassus*) **Mrs. HOOPER,**—*her* 1*st Appearance,*

Senona, (*Wife of Spartacus*) **Miss HUDDART,**—1*st Appearance these* 5 *Years*

☞ *The Principal Scenery will consist of*

A ROMAN STREET. **THE HOUSE OF CRASSUS.**

A ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE!

Retreat of Spartacus, near Rhegium!

☞ In order that the Public may judge of the effects of the New Orchestra, previous to the Tragedy,

THE BAND WILL PLAY THE OVERTURE TO "ANACREON."

The Evening's Performances will terminate with *(2nd Time at this Theatre)* the Farce of

SCAN. MAG.

Mr. Theodore Singleton, Mr. BARTLEY, Edward Singleton, Mr. HOOPER, Capt. Tinderly, Mr. BAKER
Tommy Caudle, Mr. MEADOWS, John Grub, Mr. BEDFORD, Beadle, Mr. T. MATTHEWS,
Emily Singleton, Mrs. VINING, Fanny, Mrs. HUMBY, Julia, Miss LEE, Mrs. Caudle, Mrs. C. JONES.

To-morrow, Shakspeare's Comedy of **AS YOU LIKE IT.** Orlando, Mr. Cooper, Jaques, Mr. Warde
Amiens, Mr. Wilson, Adam, Mr. Bartley, Touchstone, Mr. Meadows, Rosalind, Miss Taylor,
(her First Appearance these Two Years) Audrey, Mrs. Humby. After which, **(First Time at Half-Price)** Balfe's Grand Original Opera of

THE SIEGE OF ROCHELLE!

On Wednesday, **a Tragedy in which Mr. EDWIN FORREST will appear.**

On Thursday, will be produced *(for the First Time)* a Drama, in Three Acts, to be entitled

The Duchess of Ormond.

The Duchess of Ormond, - Miss HUDDART.

After which will be revived, **WITH ALL ITS ORIGINAL SPLENDOUR,**

THE JEWESS!

On Friday, **a Tragedy in which Mr. EDWIN FORREST will appear.**

Mr. BALFE

will appear in his own Opera of *The Siege of Rochelle*, To-morrow Evening, and will immediately afterwards appear **IN A NEW GRAND OPERA!**

before the invasion of the Romans, and contrasts it with the devastation which had followed their footsteps, struck us as being particularly happy. At the conclusion of the play Mr. Forrest was called for, and began to address the audience, — a practice not usual nor safe, at least on this side of the Atlantic. He thanked them for the reception they had bestowed on him, and expressed his satisfaction in finding in that reception a proof of their good-will towards America. Now, although their praises were warm and hearty, they were given to him personally and simply because they thought he deserved them, and would have been just as freely bestowed if he had come from Kamtschatka as from New York. There are no national prejudices between an audience and an actor, nor anywhere else in this country, which could make it for a moment questionable that a deserving artist would be well received from whatever quarter of the globe he arrived. When, however, Mr. Forrest, encouraged by the applause, began to thank them for the favors they had shown to the tragedy, he provoked some dissent, the audience not seeming to think as highly of the poet as of the player. So Mr. Forrest made his bow and retired.

"We shall be glad to see him in some other character, and if he acquits himself hereafter as well as he did on this occasion, he will have no reason to be dissatisfied with his voyage, and the theatre will have engaged an able performer, who to very considerable skill in his profession adds the attraction of a somewhat novel and a much more spirited style of playing than any other tragic actor now on our stage."

Henry Wikoff, who was present at Forrest's English *début*, gives the following account of the scene : —

"On the 17th of October [1836] he made his first bow to the British public. Old Drury was crowded from pit

to ceiling with an eager and excited audience. All the friends of the popular actors of the day congregated in force. The American minister [Andrew Stevenson, of Virginia], and all the fellow-countrymen of Forrest, were likewise present. There was silence until *Spartacus, the Gladiator*, came forward, when a hearty shout of welcome broke forth from all parts of the house. His magnificent person astonished those who had never seen him; his rich and powerful voice thrilled all who had not heard it; his earnest, impassioned acting quite electrified the audience. At the end he was overwhelmed with applause, and it was plain he had secured a hold on British sympathies, which he never lost. There was a clique present who were disappointed by his success, and when he appeared, at the general demand, to make his acknowledgments, they raised the cry of 'Shakspere, Shakspere!' Their object was evident. The partisans of the popular actors of the time knew it would be easier to arouse opposition to a foreigner should he attempt a *rôle* the public were accustomed to see played according to the idiosyncrasies of the tragedians who had successfully assumed them, and which only proved my judgment was correct in suggesting an original part for Forrest's *début*."

Besides the direct glories of the theatre, social courtesies were tendered Forrest. The then unusual honor of a dinner at the Garrick Club was offered and accepted. Here he sat down with Charles Kemble and Macready. Sergeant Talfourd was in the chair, and a host of England's greatest men filled the spacious room. It was during this engagement that he first met the lady whom he afterwards married, — Miss Catherine Sinclair. Thus his first engagement in England resulted, to all appear-

ance, happily, leading to new alliances, dramatic and domestic, to financial prosperity and general esteem.

His return to America was the signal for ovations of every kind, social and professional. He now enjoyed great public favor, and horses, steamers, and carriages were called by the name of America's greatest actor. He resumed his American engagements on the 15th of November, 1837, at the old Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, where he played for one month to overflowing houses. On the 11th of December a great banquet was tendered him by Nicholas Biddle, Hon. J. R. Ingersoll, Dr. Samuel Jackson, Colonel John B. Wetherill, Hon. John Swift, Colonel James Page, Morton McMichael, Robert T. Conrad, Robert Morris, and other distinguished gentlemen of his native city. The speech of the evening was by Chief Justice Gibson, who gave as a toast, "The Stage and its *Master*." Forrest's reply was in excellent taste, and his allusions to his own early days in his native place, his struggles, his encouragements, and, lastly, the present happy result, were received with great enthusiasm.

He now entered upon his regular engagements through the different cities of the Union, meeting everywhere with the same success, amassing a fortune, and enjoying the intimacy of some of the best spirits of the land. He had reached the summit of his fame. The idol of a nation, high in honor, happy in wealth, married to a young and lovely woman who could sympathize with all his lofty aspirations, — who could foretell disaster from such a happy and fortuitous condition of affairs?

CHAPTER VI.

THE ASTOR PLACE RIOT.

THE fatal riot which occurred in Astor Place was the culmination of a quarrel between Forrest and Macready, which had been growing for years. Other events of Forrest's life were so involved in the career of Macready that a sketch of the latter will not be out of place here. William Charles Macready was not destined by his parents for a player's life, although he was the son of a celebrated country actor and manager, who had conducted one of the great English circuits for several years with varying success, playing important characters himself. William was sent to a preparatory school with the intention of giving him the advantages of a university training. Disaster came to the affairs of the father, however, and the education of the son was interrupted just at the moment when he was about to mount to a high place in the school. Disappointed at this condition of things, but with much honesty of purpose, he turned to the profession of his father, taking his place in the active management of the circuit, and at last making his appearance as an actor. He had many opportunities for study, although as much work on his hands as he could well perform. He succeeded in

placing the family affairs on a more prosperous footing, paid the pressing debts of his father, and, after several years of provincial work, found a place at last in London, that metropolis towards which the provincial English actor looks with hungry longing.

Macready was a scholar, and he was a worker; but he had no love for his calling. It had robbed him of the prize which seemed so close to his hand, — a good social position and lettered ease. Diligently he strove to rise from the lower ranks of his new profession, but the superior qualities of his rivals stood ever in his way. He seemed to possess none of the requisites for an actor, save industry; he was gaunt and angular, had an unmusical voice and an awkward manner, possessing none of that magnetic quality which wins the auditor oftentimes before the interest of the character has unfolded itself in the plot; but he was an enormous worker, with a soul boiling against his surroundings. With an ambition which jealousy tinctured and made contemptible, he spared no pains, he shunned no task which could help him on towards the height on which his eyes were fixed. The heavy parts in the plays fell to him, and his manner suited them admirably. He contended with such theatrical giants as the last of the Kembles, Charles Young, Junius Brutus Booth, and Edmund Kean. His style was unlike theirs; his work was cold, full of scholarship and of study, but not impulsive or spontaneous. He was compelled to give place for many years to men whose excellence and superiority he never would confess; but they were the idols of the public, and by their side

Macready never held any other than a subordinate rank. It is said that when the play of the "Apostate" was brought to the theatre by the author, the elder Booth, who was enamored of Miss O'Neill, then the darling of the London public, and the greatest actress of her day, declined the part of *Pescara*, the villain, which he afterwards made so famous, and demanded that of *Hemeya*, the lover of *Florinda*, that he might play the love scenes with the O'Neill. This incident placed the part in Macready's hands; and it was the first great hit he had made in London. The character was soon resumed by Booth, for whom it was intended, and never afterwards acted by Macready. At length, one by one, the great men who had been in the way of his advancement were removed, and he stood in the front rank of his profession. All the harshness of his nature now appeared; he became haughty and offensive to all about him, subservient only to the aristocracy, but still working at his art with the spirit of a slave at the galleys. He was of an economical nature, and soon accumulated means. He quarrelled with and left his old manager, and, aided by the wealthy friends whom he had never failed to propitiate, became himself a manager, inaugurating a series of revivals of old plays magnificent beyond the experience of that day. His research and scholarship attracted to the theatre learned men, and he gave a healthy impetus to dramatic taste which will ever be his crown. He put himself prominently forward in these revivals, but they were none the less creditable and admirable. His career as a manager was marked by tyranny and cruelty. He had no friends in those

who served him; he allowed no rivals to stand between him and the public. When Ryder once remonstrated with him upon some occasion of punished insubordination, and told him he was a tyrant, Macready replied: "No, sir; I am not a tyrant. I am a despot." He dearly loved a lord; he dearly hated his profession, — but it gave him all he had; without it he would be nothing. Like Congreve, before him, he had a snob's contempt for his art, and was more proud of his social position than of his reputation as an actor, well meriting from the Voltaires of his day the rebuke of the old French philosopher who, on the well-known occasion of his visit to the author of "The Double Dealer" and "Love for Love," so pointedly declared that he had called, not upon Congreve the gentleman, but upon Congreve the writer, adding, "If you had been no more than a gentleman, sir, I would not have been here."

Macready, however, attracted to the theatre some of the ablest contemporary writers; and the best stage editions of the plays of his time are those which bear the marks of his directing talent. He was the original of more than one hundred characters, and became at last recognized as the great representative English actor. He was the friend of Bulwer, of Dickens, of Forster, and of Talfourd, and was so tenacious of what he considered his dignity that he never permitted his children to see him in any of his characters for fear they might conceive contempt for his authority. He was a despot at home as well as in the theatre. He kept a diary which speaks wonders for his diligence and his industry,

but shows the violent, impetuous nature that was constantly leading him into difficulties, as constantly, however, to be regretted on bended knees. Some parts of this diary resemble the Confessions of Rousseau. He seemed to bear a scourging monitor within his breast, and that monitor was ever applying the scourge.

His performances were models of mechanism, they lacked the divine spark which is called genius, but were yet penetrated by an intelligence which gave them unusually attractive power. He was greatest in such parts as *Richelieu*, *Werner*, and *Cassius*, where a certain angularity of mind and body are not out of place, and where a dry subtlety and a studied declamation are accepted in lieu of magnetic powers. No two men could be more unlike than were Macready and Forrest, — the one scholarly, mechanical, cold, laboring without love in the hard traces of his profession; the other open, frank, and an ardent lover of whatever he was called upon in his art to do. A good illustration of the self-consciousness of Macready is given in one of the pages of his diary. He is going to the first performance of Bulwer's "Money," after many rehearsals, and much care on his part; and he ingenuously notes that "he is certain the play will fail because there are two other good parts in the piece." These are the conflicting elements which form the character of one of the most noted actors of his age, or any age; but when all is said, common justice demands the acknowledgment that the modern theatre owes more to the industry of William Macready than to the example of any other actor who preceded or followed him. The stage needed just such

a laborer to show to the followers of Edmund Kean that genius alone is not able to advance the highest purpose of any art. By his constant and untiring will he performed a herculean task, and he restored to the stage a more careful and more cultivated study of its aims and ends. With all the elaboration of modern French comedy he united some of the deepest subtleties of the old masters of the dramatic art; and the weird tragedy of "Macbeth" under his skilful mechanism was endowed with such an amount of faithful detail that the play became almost a new work, and gave his own performance a place beyond the power of any rival. No career is so instructive to the young actor as that of Macready, in spite of the offensive nature of the man.

He occupied a place in the English theatre which at his retirement remained vacant for twenty years, until Henry Irving advanced to fill it with some of the same powerful qualities of his predecessor, much of his industry, but none of his coldness for his fellow-men. Macready's life was that of a scholar, a gentleman, and a good citizen. He fulfilled all the requirements of his social life, and retired at last from an art which he hated, rich in fortune, fame, and friends. True to his principles to the last hour of his professional life, he is said to have told his servant, when he was going to take his leave forever of the public, to "hold the curtain close when he came off, that he might not be annoyed by the adieus of those actors." He never concealed his contempt for Charles Kean, who rivalled him in his last years, and of whom he always spoke as "the son of his

father." Enough has been shown of Macready's life to make it clear that when Forrest went to England, he was likely to find that actor's friendship warm or cold, as he succeeded or failed. Macready had appeared in America in 1826, playing in New York, Philadelphia, and other large cities, but with moderate success. His style was not pleasing to the masses, more used to the robust method of Cooper or the fiery genius of Booth, although he attracted the notice of scholars and the polite circles generally. He had brought letters which gave him the *entrée* to many hospitable houses, but his friends could not stir up popular feeling in his favor. He returned in 1827, feeling that he had not been appreciated here.

He was courteous to Forrest on his first visit, and a seeming friendship sprang up between the two men. Macready was an old friend of the lady who became the wife of Forrest, and they often met under Sinclair's roof. He was one of the honored guests at the ceremony of their marriage, and seemed happy in the success which the young actor was gaining in a foreign land. Years passed on, and Macready came again to America, reappearing in 1843. Forrest was then at the height of his fame, and the performances of Macready compared unfavorably in the mind of the public with those of their own actor. The papers entered into a wordy discussion upon the merits of the rival stars, and considerable feeling was aroused on both sides, national jealousy often stepping in to make matters worse. Macready returned to his own country with hatred in his heart for the man who had been the

cause, as he thought, of his second American failure. When Forrest went to London in 1845, he was met on the night of his opening with a storm of hisses, and he was compelled after a few nights to give up his engagement and retire. Forrest at once charged the violence of his reception upon Macready, whether justly or unjustly can never be known, and declared that by his means John Forster and a clique of London critics had joined together to write and hiss him down. The journals which on his former visit had been loud in his praises could now find no words strong enough to paint his barbarous faults.

Social intercourse was broken off by Forrest, who held Macready directly responsible for his reception. He travelled through the provinces, and at Edinburgh one night, while sitting in a box to see Macready's *Hamlet*, he was foolish enough to hiss him in what he called a *pas de mouchoir* in the play scene. This act, opposed to good taste, and the duty which the actor owes to his public and to himself, was at once reported in the newspapers, and led to letters of crimination and recrimination, which made the quarrel an open scandal, not only in England, but in America, where the articles were copied and read by the friends and foes of both men.

Mr. Macready's first impressions of this unfortunate affair, recorded in his diary, are interesting here, and are quoted in full : —

"EDINBURGH, March 2, 1846. — Acted *Hamlet*, really with particular care, energy, and discrimination. The audience gave less applause to the first soliloquy than I am

in the habit of receiving; but I was bent on acting the part, and I felt, if I can feel at all, that I had strongly excited them, and that their sympathies were cordially, indeed enthusiastically, with me. On reviewing the performance, I can conscientiously pronounce it one of the very best I have given of *Hamlet*. At the waving of the handkerchief before the play, and 'I must be idle,' a man on the right side of the stage — upper boxes or gallery, but said to be upper boxes — hissed! The audience took it up, and I waved the more, and bowed derisively and contemptuously to the individual. The audience carried it, though he was very stanch to his purpose. It discomposed me, and, alas! might have ruined many; but I bore it down. I thought of speaking to the audience, if called on, and spoke to Murray about it, but he, very discreetly, dissuaded me. Was called for and very warmly greeted. Ryder came and spoke to me, and told me that the hisser was observed, and said to be a Mr. W——, who was in company with Mr. Forrest. The man writes in the *Journal*, a paper depreciating me and eulogizing Mr. F., sent to me from this place."

Forrest came back to his own country with a raging heart against England and Englishmen, and particularly against William C. Macready. The case became an international one, — the quarrel of John Bull and his young offspring, Brother Jonathan. Forrest's reception became a matter of patriotism; the Democracy rallied as one man to vindicate his honor and that of the nation insulted in his person. It was well known that, while he had been denied a fair hearing in London, on account, perhaps, of Macready's secret opposition, he had gained the applause of all the provinces through

which he played immediately after his London failure; but this fact did not weigh in the minds of his ardent friends. A storm was brewing which only waited the return of Macready to burst and scatter death and destruction in its course.

It was during this interval — in June, 1847 — that Edwin Forrest's mother died, an event which gave his heart a shock more violent than any it had before known. Her death lent a sombre coloring to the joy with which fame and success in his art were now filling his soul, and over her grave he shed bitter tears.

In September, 1848, Macready returned to America. A plan was formed, but defeated by Forrest to whom it was submitted, that Macready should be hissed from the stage. Macready, in one of his speeches before the curtain, unwisely alluded to this rumored attempt, in order, it seemed, to gain sympathy for himself. He was openly hissed in Forrest's native city, and there, before the curtain, alluded to the scene in Edinburgh, where Forrest had hissed him. Forrest replied to this in a violent and ungentlemanly letter the next day in the public prints. Macready responded, and threatened a lawsuit. Forrest had stigmatized him as an "aged driveller," Macready then being a little more than fifty years of age. In a subsequent "card" Forrest declared that he solemnly believed Macready had instigated his friends in England to write him down, and to drive him from the field.

The honors in this wordy squabble were all with Macready, who preserved his dignity while defending his cause. Forrest's outbreaks were in direct violation of

good taste. The papers were full of the quarrel, and different sides were taken by Americans as well as foreigners. The following "card," from the Philadelphia *Pennsylvanian* of November 22, 1848, is eminently characteristic of Forrest, and will give a fair idea of the manner in which the wordy war was waged on his part: —

"Mr. Macready, in his speech last night to the audience assembled at the Arch Street Theatre, made allusion, I understand, to an 'American actor' who had the temerity on one occasion 'openly to hiss him.' This is true, and, by the way, the only truth which I have been enabled to gather from the whole scope of his address. But why say 'an American actor'? Why not openly charge me with the act? for I did it, and publicly avowed it in *The Times* newspaper, of London, and at the same time asserted my right to do so.

"On the occasion alluded to, Mr. Macready introduced a fancy dance into his performance of *Hamlet*, which I designated as a *pas de mouchoir*, and which I hissed, for I thought it a desecration of the scene; and the audience thought so, too; for, a few nights afterwards, when Mr. Macready repeated the part of *Hamlet* with the same 'tomfoolery,' the intelligent audience greeted it with an universal hiss.

"Mr. Macready is stated to have said last night that he 'had never entertained towards me a feeling of unkindness.' I unhesitatingly pronounce this to be a wilful and unblushing falsehood. I most solemnly aver, and do believe, that Mr. Macready, instigated by his narrow, envious mind and selfish fears, did secretly — not openly — suborn several writers for the English press to write me down. Among them was one Forster, a 'toady' of the

eminent tragedian, — one who is ever ready to do his dirty work; and this Forster, at the bidding of his patron, attacked me in print, even before I had appeared upon the London boards, and continued to abuse me at every opportunity afterwards.

"I assert also, and solemnly believe, that Mr. Macready connived, when his friends went to the theatre in London, to hiss me, and did hiss me, with the purpose of driving me from the stage; and all this happened many months before the affair at Edinburgh, to which Mr. Macready refers, and in relation to which he jesuitically remarks, that 'until that act he never entertained towards me a feeling of unkindness.' Pah! Mr. Macready has no feeling of kindness for any actor who is likely by his talent to stand in his way. His whole course as manager and as actor proves this. There is nothing in him but self — self — self; and his own countrymen, the English actors, know this well. Mr. Macready has a very lively imagination, and often draws upon it for his facts. He said, in a speech at New York, that there also there was an 'organized opposition' to him, which is likewise false. There was no opposition manifested towards him there, for I was in the city at the time, and careful to watch every movement with regard to such a matter. Many of my friends called upon me when Mr. Macready was announced to perform, and proposed to drive him from the stage, for his conduct to me in London. My advice was, do nothing; let the superannuated driveller alone; to oppose him would be but to make him of some importance. My friends agreed with me that it was at least the most dignified course to pursue; and it was immediately adopted. With regard to an 'organized opposition' to him in Boston, that is, I believe, equally false. But perhaps, in charity to the poor old

man, I should impute these 'chimeras dire' rather to the disturbed state of his guilty conscience than to any desire on his part wilfully to misrepresent."

On the 7th of May, 1848, Macready began an engagement at the Astor Place Opera House, under the management of J. H. Hackett. The theatre was packed by his enemies, and he was hooted from the stage. He prepared to return to his own country, but was persuaded by his friends to remain, in order that he might see how far the public indorsed the opposition against him. An invitation to this effect, signed by many of the best citizens of New York, was taken as a defiance by the admirers of Forrest, who prepared to meet the issue. Forrest was playing at the Broadway Theatre, and on the 16th of May Macready, at the Astor Place house, was announced to reappear as *Macbeth*. The authorities had been called to the aid of the signers of the call, and when the doors were opened the theatre was instantly filled by a crowd of persons favorable to the actor, while the great mass of his enemies were excluded. These filled the street, however, while the few who did gain admission showed their opposition upon the appearance of Macready. At the first attempt the assailants were confronted by a body of Macready's friends within the theatre too powerful to be resisted; but the majority without added a threatening reinforcement when the decisive moment for violence should arrive.

The play was stopped, Macready, hustled from the back door, in the cloak of a friend, barely escaped with his life, and the mimic tragedy within doors gave way

to the approaching real tragedy without. The theatre was attacked on all sides by the mob, and its destruction seemed inevitable. Troops were called out, the order was given to disperse, the angry crowd only hooted a reply of derision, the riot act was read amid the yells and oaths of the blood-seeking rabble, stones and missiles were hurled at the Seventh Regiment, the police gave way before the overpowering numbers of the mob, and at last, the soldiers, sore pressed, wounded, and nearly demoralized by the assaults which they were not allowed to repulse, were called upon to fire. They responded with blank cartridges, which only increased the fury of the crowd. A pause, and then the order was given to load with balls. A volley was fired; the cries were hushed, the smoke cleared away, the ground was red with the blood of some thirty unfortunate men, the rioters vanished into the darkness before that hail of wrath, and the stain of blood was upon that quarrel which began far away in Old England and ended so tragically here.

Macready returned home full of manly regret for the horror which had clouded his American visit, and Forrest at once lost the support of what is called the "upper classes" of his own people. This quarrel with Macready has been given at some length, because it exercised an important influence upon the career of Forrest. The right which he claimed to hiss a brother actor cannot be defended. He was too great a man to descend to such pitiful revenge. He was, however, now more than ever an object of interest to his more humble admirers; and certain ardent patri-

ots saw in him, or fancied they did, a champion of American resistance to English assumption. He lived to learn that the fame of a great actor, so hard to attain, is still harder to keep. Like the most delicate lace, one flaw will cause the destruction of the whole fabric.

CHAPTER VII.

DOMESTIC LIFE.

THE lady who became the wife of Edwin Forrest was Miss Catherine Sinclair. Her father was a man of some celebrity in musical circles, and his home was the resort of men and women of taste and culture, and one of the art centres of London. The accomplishments of Miss Sinclair were the admiration of her home circle, while her beauty attracted to her side a host of adorers. Even in a society where physical and mental beauty are not uncommon qualities in the female sex, the claims of Miss Sinclair were allowed preeminence. She was the lifelong friend of Macready, and at her home he often met Forrest, even after the first seeds of the quarrel were sown. The affection which sprang up in the breast of Forrest on his presentation to Miss Sinclair was reciprocated by the fair object of his love, and the parental consent was given to their union. Henry Wikoff, a friend of Forrest's and the Sinclairs, who was present at their marriage, thus describes it in his "Reminiscences of an Idler:" —

"In the latter part of June [1837] the marriage of Forrest took place in the church of the parish he was living in, St. Paul's, Covent Garden, which was built in 1633,

and is said to contain the remains of more celebrities than any church in London, save Westminster Abbey. It was there the handsome actor, William O'Brien, married his runaway bride, Lady Susan Strongways, eldest daughter of the Earl of Ilchester. Only a limited number of the tragedian's friends were invited, as he desired to avoid anything like a sensational display. Among these were the American minister and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. John Bates, Mr. and Mrs. Dunlop, and Miss Gamble, with some others. The Rev. John Croly, the biographer of George IV., officiated. I had the honor of figuring as Forrest's only groomsman, or, as they call it here, his 'best man.' I do not believe there ever was seen a handsomer couple who took each other for better or worse, than the twain who were nuptially bound together that day. Forrest was just thirty-one, and a model of manly beauty; his bride barely twenty, and neither poet nor painter ever dreamed of anything more lovely than she appeared on her bridal day. Everybody gazed on them with admiration, and declared never was seen a more beautiful pair. From the church we adjourned to the house of the bride's father, in Alfred Place, where the usual wedding breakfast was served with great luxury. The United States minister, in a felicitous speech, toasted the happy couple, and Forrest responded in the best taste. Dr. Croly, even better known in the literary world than the church, delivered a very effective speech. . . . They looked supremely happy as they set off on their hymeneal trip, and everybody heartily wished them God-speed."

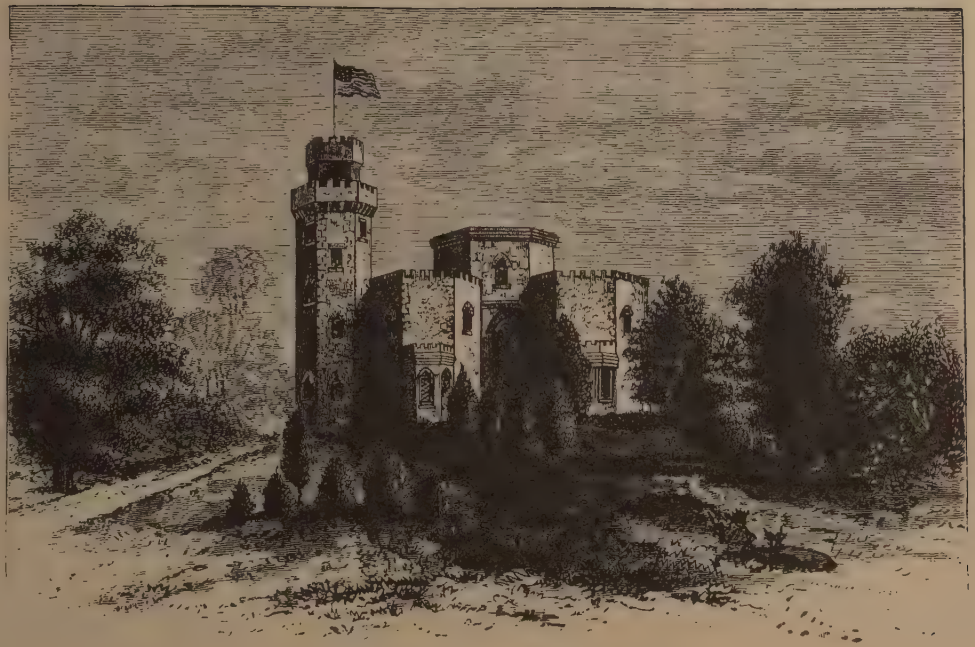
It was remembered later that Forrest had met Miss Sinclair on Friday, had proposed on Friday, and was married on Friday. This may have been one of those stories which are told after a catastrophe to fit the cir-

cumstances, and perhaps is not reliable. Mr. and Mrs. Forrest soon after embarked for America, leaving behind them a whole heart full of regrets, and encountering on their arrival here as warm a welcome on the part of the bridegroom's old admirers, who were eager to become the lady's slaves as well. Presented to his friends, she at once made a deep and lasting impression. Her native delicacy of mind and refinement of manners enchanted those who hoped for some such influence to be exerted in softening the rough vigor and democratic downrightness of the man. Their society was courted by all those who knew the actor; and for the first time the admirers of Forrest's genius might hope to see him at the fireside of a peaceful home, where beauty and grace presided. She became his companion in his travels, making the time fly pleasantly when the cares of the theatre were over. The hitherto lonely moments passed by him in strange hotels were now intervals of happiness, brightened by her loving companionship. She was his equal mentally, and the play of her intellect brought out all the power of his own well-stored mind.

The friendship which Mr. Leggett had ever entertained for Forrest was now extended to his wife, and until his death that learned man and constant friend retained his place in their hearts. During their many journeyings to the far West a pleasant correspondence was kept up between them and the Leggetts, and in these letters the young wife gives many evidences of the commanding quality of her intellect and her advanced opinions on the subject of the married state. The family of Forrest welcomed his bride with open hearts,

and to Eleanora, the favorite sister of Edwin, the young English girl became a loving and constant friend. When absent, hers were the letters which brought to the sisters' fireside the news of their wandering fortunes, and her name became a household word in her husband's family.

At times the actor's duties called him away from the side of his wife, and then her letters betrayed the anxious love she bore for the absent one; his replies being equally affectionate. To their home came troops of friends, attracted equally by the fame of the husband and the charms of the wife. Willis was there, the fashionable poet of the day; and Bryant, the editor of the *Post*, the poet whose lines form a part of our literature, with his grave, thoughtful face, recalling to the young wife the early glories of her gallant husband, — a notable figure in that social group, who was to survive all the vicissitudes of the pair, and go down at last, in a good old age, to his rest. The Godwins, husband and wife, close friends of both, afterwards so sadly interested in the separation, shared an honored place in that family group. While just in its dawn, there was the manly affection and enduring trust of James Oakes, and a renewal of an old boy-love, begun in their early Thespian days in Philadelphia, with James Rees, who still lives, and who as "Colley Cibber" has since given us an estimate of his dead friend, true and invaluable. Now in the ripe fulness of his fortune, the thoughtful husband looked forward to his future, and Fonthill was chosen as a home. The plans were formed by Mrs. Forrest and approved by him. A castle of mixed



architecture was to spring up on the banks of the Hudson, which was to be a witness to posterity of the love its founder bore his art; for it was dedicated to American actors, whose home at its builder's death it was intended to be. As Nature had denied Edwin Forrest offspring, he desired to adopt the unfortunate members of his profession. In loving emulation the youthful pair vied with each other in plans for the advancement of their project, and as the pile assumed proportions they gazed with pardonable pride upon their work. A rude structure was erected on the grounds, and here they often repaired to pass happy hours in directing and watching the progress of the building. Here, on a certain Fourth of July, Edwin Forrest gathered a number of his friends and neighbors, and, surrounded by them on a green knoll, he read the Declaration of Independence as he only could read that document.

The married life of Forrest promised to be as peaceful and happy as his professional life was glorious. Those who before did not believe him to be a domestic character were now nearly convinced of their errors. If he were framed at all for the quiet happiness which belongs to the fireside, surely here were the influences which should attract him; a young and lovely wife, a prosperous fortune, and a place in the estimation of the world beyond the common inheritance even of extraordinary men.

His friends declared, indeed, that they saw an unusual softness and gentleness in his hitherto brusque and harsh demeanor, and they attributed it to the influence of her who reigned in the home circle. A playful

humor, which had only been allowed limited license before, now seemed to be natural to him, and was a welcome relief after the heavy duties of the artist were performed. The rehearsals which had hitherto been attended often by outbreaks of violence were now less turbulent, and even carelessness or indifference escaped his merited rebuke. To this period belongs the anecdote of the poor actor who was so slow in catching the expression of certain lines which Forrest was trying to teach him. When he had failed after many efforts to imbue the pale speaker with some of his own spirit, he excitedly repeated the speech himself, and gave it with all the Forrestian emphasis. Halting at the close, "There," he said, "can you not speak it like that?" The actor replied quietly, "If I could, Mr. Forrest, I would not be playing here for five dollars a week." "Is that all your salary?" inquired Forrest. "All, sir." "Well, then, speak it your own way, sir." The poor actor's salary was raised, however, and when he went to the box-office on next pay-day he had cause to thank the forbearance of the star. This is only one of the many acts of thoughtful kindness which are told of him during the early and happy days of his married life.

Honors not professional were now heaped upon Forrest. He was offered the nomination to Congress from one of the New York City districts, which he declined. His steady democracy and honest manliness would have made a mark in those halls, where eloquence like his is rarely found. He delivered the oration on a Fourth of July before a political gathering in New

York, in which, of course, many of his professional admirers were numbered. It seemed as if the glory of his dramatic career was to be reflected in a social elevation which should raise the public regard for his calling, and add new laurels to his already laden brow.

The American Dramatic Fund was organized about this time, and he was chosen its first president. It had given promise of being an active promoter of the best interests of the American actor, and he lent to the scheme his hearty support. When he withdrew his influence later, it fell into a torpid condition, because no longer American in its aims; and now it lingers on, with few members, the seal of death stamped upon it.

Wherever his eye fell upon anything suggesting the advancement of his art, he instantly gave it his encouragement. Learning by the winning example of his wife the habit of conciliation, he sought to enlarge the circle of his acquaintance by a judicious selection. His choice fell upon many who admired him for his genius, and were attracted by his frank, generous manner; and while such men as John B. Rice, William Warren, and others of their exalted character, stood in the ranks of Forrest's friends, he felt assured that their relations were so independent of all self-interest as to be highly complimentary to him.

His professional engagements were numerous, his profits swelling the bulk of his growing fortune at a rate exceeding all precedent. His property in Kentucky he now improved, and gave to one of its avenues the name of his beloved Oakes. His theatrical position at the head of his profession was unchallenged.

Even such giants as Booth and Wallack could not deny his precedence, when a whole nation endorsed his claim and were his servants.

The preparations at Fonthill went on meanwhile, and that massive pile moved towards its completion. Here it was his wont to refresh his body and recreate his mind, surrounded by the loving friends whom his own genius and the graces of his wife attracted. The sister of Mrs. Forrest and her father and mother shared his hospitable home, and all the relaxations which such family reunions and domestic associations bring seemed created to brighten the path of the hard-working actor.

New parts were added to his *repertoire*, and *Richelieu* and *Claude* (in the "Lady of Lyons") gave new evidences of his power. His plans for the encouragement of an American drama, only in part a failure, gave him new material in the "Broker of Bogota" and in "Metamora," both produced with decided success.

How far Edwin Forrest was fitted to enjoy the calm delights of a home it is impossible to say. His friends could not realize that one so imperious, so born to rule and be obeyed, could consent to become in the slightest sense subordinate to the will of another. They had not known how the strong knee had bent before the mother whom he adored; how, at the parental fireside, the son was moved by the will of the good old woman who could lead him by love alone.

The first cloud which seemed to lower over the domestic heaven appeared in England during his second visit, when it was said he became angry because his wife was unwilling to drive Macready from her side

during her receptions. Forrest himself refused to speak to him, and he felt it galling to be compelled to see any one dear to him courteous to such an enemy. Macready had known the Sinclairs intimately for years, and on this occasion had mingled with her other friends to welcome Mrs. Forrest on her return to England.

To those who saw only the outward signs, this period may be regarded as that in which Edwin Forrest stood at the very pinnacle of worldly renown. Rich, famous, happy, he possessed a threefold gift of the gods, and he might, like Polycrates, almost tremble at so much favor; indeed, the hour was at hand when the hollowness of this show was to be revealed, and we sorrowfully turn now to write the record of a career which touched its zenith too early, and was destined too quickly to decline. In an evil hour for himself, in an evil hour for his art and the struggling drama in America, Edwin Forrest threw open the doors of his home to the scrutiny of the world, and appealed to the courts to remove the skeleton which was hidden in his closet. With the proceedings of that trial, which resulted in divorce, alimony, and separation, this memoir has nothing to do. All those who are curious for such information are referred to two large volumes of a thousand pages each, which contain the records of a legal battle unprecedented for bitterness and for the wide interest it created on account of the position of the contestants, as well as the eminent character of the counsel. While the proud, imperious temper of Forrest may not have fitted him for the married state, it seems certain that he was compelled to endure (as in

his wife's reception of Macready in London) such assaults upon his pride as seemed severe trials to one of his nature, and both man and wife must have lived to agree with Pericles, that "She is best who is least spoken of among men, whether for good or evil."

Those who had taken the part of Macready in the quarrel and *émeute* in Astor Place now managed to divide public opinion in the interest of the wife, and a strong opposition was established among those who had espoused the Macready cause on that occasion. The friends of good order, the friends of social decorum, the higher classes generally, were on the side of the wife and against the husband; and when the result was reached and a verdict given in the lady's favor, none rejoiced more than those who had been defeated in their efforts to give Macready the hearing in America which was denied to Forrest in England. With the consequences of those events the following chapter will deal; we only state here that the alimony was fixed at three thousand dollars a year, and the divorce granted to the lady alone, the husband being debarred from marrying again.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE TRIAL. — MRS. FORREST'S PROFESSIONAL LIFE.

EDWIN FORREST, leaving the court-room a defeated man, was instantly raised to a popularity with the masses beyond anything even he had before experienced. The public reversed the judgment of the court, and while "good society" applauded the clearance of the lady, the hard-handed democracy hailed their old favorite as "martyr," crowning him with a wreath of sorrow, only that they might worship him the more.

He began an engagement soon after at the Broadway Theatre, opening as *Damon*. The house was crowded to suffocation. Upon his entrance he was greeted with deafening cheers, which were repeated again and again while the actor bowed his thanks. A large flag was unfurled in the pit by his admirer, Captain Rynders, with the words, "This is the people's verdict;" and at the close of the play, when called before the curtain, he was obliged to respond to the demands for a "speech." He spoke as follows, quoting from the ample and complete life of Forrest by the Rev. William R. Alger: —

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, — After the unparalleled verdict which you have rendered me here to-night, you

will not doubt that I consider this the proudest moment of my life. And yet it is a moment not unmingled with sadness. Instinctively I ask myself the question, Why is this vast assemblage here to-night, composed as it is of the intelligent, the high-minded, the right-minded, and last, though not least, the beautiful of the Empire City? Is it because a favorite actor appears in a favorite character? No, the actor and the performances are as familiar to you as household words. Why, then, this unusual ferment? It is because you have come to express your irrepressible sympathy for one whom you know to be a deeply-injured man. Nay, more, you are here with a higher and a holier purpose, — to vindicate the principle of even-handed justice. I do not propose to examine the proceedings of the late unhappy trial; those proceedings are now before you, and before the world, and you can judge as rightly of them as I can. I have no desire to instruct you in the verdict you shall render. The issue of that trial will yet be before the court, and I shall patiently await the judgment of that court, be it what it may. In the meanwhile, I submit my cause to you, — my cause, did I say? — no, not my cause alone, but yours, the cause of every man in the community, the cause of every human being, the cause of every honest wife, the cause of every virtuous woman, the cause of every one who cherishes a home and the pure spirit which should abide there. Ladies and gentlemen, I submit my cause to a tribunal uncorrupt and incorruptible; I submit it to the sober second thought of the people. A little while since, and I thought my pathway of life was filled with thorns; you have this night filled it with roses (looking at the bouquets at his feet). Their perfume is gratifying to the senses, and I am grateful for your beautiful and fragrant offering."

The applause which greeted this speech was prolonged until the actor had bowed himself beyond the

line of the curtain. The temperance of his words made him many new friends who expected nothing but violence. Had he practised the same restraint before and during the trial, it might have altered the issue. An illustration of that roughness which characterized him is here given. He had been intimate with the celebrated lawyer Charles O'Conor. They were neighbors, and were in the habit of conversing as they met in the railway cars on their way to or from Yonkers and New York. One day Forrest learned that O'Conor had taken the brief of Mrs. Forrest, and, without waiting to question him, on the next occasion of their meeting on the train he began an abusive attack, to which the lawyer listened in contemptuous silence, until as the train neared the station, and they were about to step down, O'Conor turned and said, "I had not decided to accept the brief in this case, but your brutal conduct has determined me, and I charge you to look well to your case, for I will show you no mercy;" a threat which the able counsel religiously kept.

For sixty-nine nights the people thronged the Broadway Theatre. The engagement was unparalleled in the history of the American drama for length and profit. All the allusions which could be applied to the trial were given with malicious point by the actor, and hailed with applause by the audience. At the end of the first act of "Richelieu," when the old cardinal said, —

> "France, I love thee; all earth shall never tear thee
> From my heart. My mistress — France, my wedded wife,
> Sweet France, who shall proclaim *divorce* for thee and me?"

the audience sprang to their feet, and in a shower of "bravos" the act-drop descended. In his final speech

at the close of this engagement he alluded to its flattering character, and ended by saying that "such a demonstration vindicates me more than a thousand verdicts, for it springs from those who make and unmake judges."

"But," using again the words of Alger, "despite the flattering applause of the multitude, added to the support of his own conscience, and notwithstanding his abounding health and strength and enhancing riches, from the date of his separation and desire for divorce, the dominant tone of the life of Forrest was changed. His demeanor had a more forbidding aspect, his disposition a sterner tinge, his faith in human nature less genial expansion, his joy in existence less spontaneous exuberance. The circle of his friends was greatly contracted, a certain irritable soreness was fixed in his sensibility, he shrank more strongly than ever from miscellaneous society, and seemed to be more asserting or protecting himself cloaked in an appearance of reserve and gloom. The world of life never again wore to him the smiling aspect it had so often worn before."

On his again assuming the labors of his profession, that which above is so clearly told became apparent to his friends. The applause which filled his ears, the wealth which flowed in upon him, could not improve that temper which had never been amiable, and all the hard stories of his life belong to this period. He measured the friendship of his old companions by their eagerness or coldness in meeting his wishes in the collection of evidence for his case in the trial, and as he was not delicate in the tone of his requests, so was he

harsh in his treatment of those who did not fulfil them. To John Rice, of Chicago, who had been closely associated with him for years, he wrote for such a service as no gentleman would care to perform, even for his dearest friend, and especially where a lady was concerned. He never spoke to Rice after his refusal, and thus lost the counsel and friendship of a man whose probity, honor, and sterling manhood were so well known in Chicago, which made him its chief officer on two occasions, and at last placed him in Congress as its representative. With another actor, John Gilbert, he refused to play when engaging for Boston after the trial, and to the day of his death he never mentioned his name without abuse.

To those who stood by him he was, on the other hand, grateful and affectionate in a marked degree. James Oakes knew no bounds in the love he bore his friend, and gave him, at every turn in the trial, proofs of his loyalty. James Lawson was equally faithful, and both received many proofs of his good-will; while for the Godwins, the Bryants, and others who had either espoused the lady's cause openly or were coldly neutral, he entertained the most freezing scorn.

Despising the spot which had been consecrated to the great purpose of his life, as a remembrance of her who had shared in its inception, he sold Fonthill to the Sisters of Notre Dame for one hundred thousand dollars, and when the second instalment fell due he remitted five thousand dollars of the purchase-money. He now bought a house and grounds on Broad Street, Philadelphia, and, placing his sisters there, he began the

foundation of another home, where all the early associations of his youth were revived and all trace of his sorrow and bitter trial banished. Now and then some touching act of charity would seem to contradict the hardness of his nature. A poor actor, late for rehearsal, was reproached by Forrest in a stern manner. The man replied that he was very sorry; he had met with a severe affliction; his boy had died in the night. Placing fifty dollars in his hand, Forrest bade the man go home, saying that he would see that his absence should not work him injury.

He sought out his early manager, Jones, whom he found poor and suffering in his old age, took him to his stately home, and relieved his wants; furnishing him with a place where he would be out of the reach of future sorrow, and watching over him until his death. An incident of his brusqueness belongs here. A lady who was dressed for a male part was in his way as he was about to go upon the stage; he ordered her to stand aside; she did not quickly obey, when he took the supposed man by the shoulder rudely and pushed him away. The lady burst into tears, and Forrest then apologized, saying, "I did not know you were a lady." Her woman's wit did not fail her as she replied, "Sir, you might have mistaken me for a gentleman."

To his other strong passions was now added that of avarice, the desire to accumulate wealth, when those to whose happiness that wealth contributed were passing beyond the need of his help. He had learned the lesson of economy in the hard school of adversity, he had known want, and he was always strictly honorable

in his money dealings. He said, "In early life I learned to depend solely upon myself for sustenance. The desire I had for wealth was first fostered only that I might be able to contribute to the comforts of those whose veins bore blood like mine, and to smooth the pathway to the grave of the gentlest, the truest, the most unselfish friend I ever knew, my mother! to relieve the wants of friends less fortunate than myself, and to succor the distressed wherever found."

He continued his engagements for several years, meeting with amazing success in all the large cities where the fame of the trial and the genius of the man made the people eager to see him. On the 20th of September, 1852, he reappeared at the Broadway Theatre, New York, and repeated the triumph of his former engagement. He returned again in February, 1853, and for the first and last time in his life he took part in a great revival of one of Shakspere's plays. "Macbeth" was produced in grand style, with new scenery and appointments. The tragedy was played on twenty consecutive nights, then by far the longest run of any Shaksperean play in America. The cast was phenomenal, Conway, Duff, Davenport, Pope, Davidge, Barry, and Madame Ponisi playing the leading parts under Mr. Forrest.

In 1855 a benefit was given to the veteran actor and manager, James W. Wallack, Sen., a warm friend of Forrest's. On this occasion he deviated from his fixed rule of life, and gave his aid and talents to the beneficiary, appearing as *Damon* to the *Pythias* of Mr. E. L. Davenport. For some professional reason now unknown, Forrest was not on speaking terms with Davenport, and

when the rehearsal took place avoided giving him direct instruction, by saying, "*Pythias* stands there," or "*Pythias* goes here," without looking towards the actor. This breach was never healed, and many years later, when Davenport sent word to Forrest that he would like to play *Iago* to his *Othello*, the reply came back, "That he would not let him play *Montano* in his cast!" These were in his violent moments, and illustrate the perverse and soured elements of his nature.

After five years of constant labor, he resolved upon taking the rest which he had often promised himself, and in the retirement of his Philadelphia home he found recreation; the presence of Forney, Dougherty, and McMichael recompensing him for the applause of the theatre, which he had for a period abandoned. These loving friends sought to draw him into society again, and drown the bitter past in the renewal of better and truer associations; but this he declined, and with his family, his books, and his few friends, he kept the chosen tenor of his way unbroken.

During this retirement the first alarming symptoms of the malady — which afterwards was so severe — appeared in an attack of inflammatory gout or rheumatism, which laid him up for weeks; but his strong constitution and regular habits of living overcame the disease for a time, and the attack was forgotten. The seeds of gout were hereditary, however, and were destined again and again to break out and shatter his giant frame.

In 1855 a series of articles appeared in one of the New York papers written in the most brilliant manner, but in every way offensive to Forrest. He was here

denounced as a "butcher," a "ranter," a "stage ruffian," and assailed by other epithets of like coarse nature. They reflected the sentiments of the clique which had been favorable to Macready at the time of the riot, and showed that the affair was not forgotten. Indeed, from this date we notice that fashionable society began to discover that Forrest was not what he had been in his earlier days. Davenport and Murdoch were said to be his superiors in *Hamlet*, Wallack, in *Rolla*, while Gustavus Brooke, a young English actor of extraordinary genius, far eclipsed him in his great part, *Othello*. Meanwhile, resisting the verdict rendered in the famous trial, and refusing to pay the alimony awarded, he carried his case to the higher court, where he hoped to obtain a reversal of the judgment; and in this way he kept his unfortunate family troubles still in the public mind.

Mrs. Forrest, resuming her maiden name, had, soon after the trial, made her appearance as an actress, selecting for her opening, with questionable taste, the comedy of the "School for Scandal." A fashionable audience greeted her, and she played other parts during her brief engagement at Brougham's Lyceum, but with diminishing success. She was supported by George Vandenhoff, under whom she had studied for the stage, by William H. Chippendale, Henry Lynne, William J. Florence, Charles Kemble Mason, Charles Walcot, John Brougham, Mrs. Skerrett, Mrs. Maeder, and others; and presented "The Lady of Lyons," "Much Ado About Nothing," "Love's Sacrifice," and "The Patrician's Daughter." Closing her season abruptly, she soon after went to California,

where she regularly entered upon the career of an actress, assumed the management of one of the theatres, was fairly prosperous, but returned at last to the East and to retirement.

Tracing her private career in the hope of finding new material for the renewal of his claim, resisting payment of the alimony which caused new involvements, Forrest kept himself upon the rack, even while seeking rest and repose in his domestic circle.

Mr. Alger has given us a beautiful picture of one of the happy scenes of his life at this time. "Early one summer morning, while visiting at Forrest's home, Oakes was seen wrapped in a silk morning-gown of George Frederick Cooke, with a wig of John Phillip Kemble on his head, and a sword of Edmund Kean by his side, tackled between the thills of a heavy stone roller, rolling the garden-walks to earn his breakfast. Forrest was behind him urging him forward. Henrietta and Eleanor Forrest gazed out of a window at the scene in amazement, until its amusing significance broke upon them, when their frolicsome peals of laughter caused the busy pair of laborers below to pause in their task and look up."

A number of Forrest's friends co-operated to obtain a marble statue of him as *Coriolanus*, and he readily lent his aid, giving sittings and such advice as the sculptor solicited. The celebrated Thomas Ball was chosen as the artist best fitted to perform the work. When completed, it was intended by Forrest to adorn the future retreat for actors, the idea of which he had never abandoned, although Fonthill had passed out of

his hands. This statue is now one of the chief points of interest in the Actors' Home at Springbrook.

Much of Forrest's time, during the interval of rest from theatrical labor, was given to the better investment of his fortune, which had now grown to such a bulk as to need the most thoughtful attention. While in his home enjoyments he kept up the studies which related to his art. Here, in the comfortable library, surrounded by his books and his few friends, he discoursed upon the stage and its past glories, with the history and traditions of which his mind was stored, or read from some poet lines which he loved, and to which his matchless voice lent new meaning.

He was always courteously willing to give private exhibitions of his powers in the recitation of selections, both humorous and pathetic. At a dinner-table, where his associates were to his liking, he was a decided addition to the merriment of the party, while as a story-teller he had surpassing power. He visited the theatres regularly, his entrance being the signal for a general murmur of approbation, and sometimes of audible applause.

The promise he had made to his friend Oakes, to abstain from professional duty for a period of years, had been well kept, but it was soon to be revoked and another era in his career to commence.

CHAPTER IX.

MATURITY.

IN answer to numerous inquiries, Mr. James Rees, the confidential friend of Mr. Forrest, authoritatively published the following during the year 1860: —

"TO CORRESPONDENTS. EDWIN FORREST.

"The question is so frequently asked in relation to the probability of this gentleman's appearing again on the stage, that we feel it a duty to answer such questions to the best of our knowledge, as we know it is not idle curiosity which prompts them.

"These inquiries, written in many instances by persons evidently anxious to witness his powerful impersonations of character, are highly flattering to this inimitable artist. They all develop to us the fact that thousands are so sickened, and in some instances disgusted, at the present state of the drama, and the paucity of genuine talent in our midst, that a change for the benefit of the whole body politic is most anxiously desired.

"To end the anxiety manifested, we can state with confidence that Mr. Forrest will appear on the stage again, and this event, so long looked for, will most probably take place in the fall or winter season of the present year. June, 1860."

Accordingly, on the 17th of September, after an absence of nearly four years, Edwin Forrest again appeared on the stage. He was engaged by James Nixon, and began his contract of one hundred nights at Niblō's Garden, New York, in the character of *Hamlet.*

During the retirement of Forrest, his fame had continued to increase. A new generation of play-goers, who had only read of the giant, were now eager to see him of whom they had heard so much. The panic of 1857, which had paralyzed all industries, and had closed the theatres, or at all events had ruined the managers and beggared the actors, was now passing away, and a better feeling was exhibited. During these years, also, new candidates for public favor had arisen in the tragic and comic field. The city of New York was passing rapidly into the great metropolis which it has since become. Great political questions were agitating the country, and parties were dividing the nation into sectional lines which threatened ominous divisions.

The theatres of New York, during the years of 1857–60, were not without attractions of a sterling character, notwithstanding the lugubrious picture drawn in Forrest's card. The old drama had not yet surrendered to the sensational enemy. "Hamlet" was being acted at four theatres at one time, and by leading favorites in each: by E. L. Davenport at the Winter Garden, by the grand old veteran, James Wallack, Sen., at his own theatre, and by two other gentlemen in East side houses. During this period a revival of "The Winter's Tale" was inaugurated at Burton's Theatre, which surpassed all previous efforts in the Shaksperean field,

Leontes being played by the younger J. W. Wallack, a man whose genius was the delight of our stage, whose versatility was the marvel of his fellows, and whose genial nature and unselfish manhood were the admiration of his friends.

Burton played *Autolycus* as he only could play it, while such actors as Fisher and Setchell, such actresses as Mrs. Amelia Parker and Sara Stevens, filled the other *rôles*. The writer had the honor of playing *Florizel* in this cast. Charles Mathews had returned to America for the third time, and shared in the revival of "Twelfth Night" with Burton, Brougham, and others of the Metropolitan Theatre Company. It was during this interval also that Charlotte Cushman reappeared on the stage after her many years of retirement, and under Burton's management gave a series of her grand performances at the same house, which filled the theatre and confirmed her fame.

During this time also the coming glories of the Wallack *régime* were foretold in the foresight and genius of the master. The elder of that name took a falling property, gave it all the vitality of his own experienced management, and laid the foundation for the great fame which has been so well perpetuated in the ability of his gifted son, Lester Wallack.

Here were shown the first-fruits of that versatile genius which has for nearly twenty-five years supplied the theatres of two nations. Here began the modern domestic drama from which the mechanical, the sensational, and the realistic derived their inspiration, but which they have so poorly and feebly imitated.

The first of the grand series of Boucicault's plays was the three-act melodrama of "Jessie Brown." The production of that piece at Wallack's marks the line which separates the theatre of the past from that of the present in America. Matilda Heron had but a few months before appeared in a play full of turgid declamation and pointless situations, — a supplement to her success in "Camille." It had failed, but the cause was found in the desire of the people for effects of a more natural character. In "Jessie Brown," the situation, the dialogue, and the superb acting at once changed the indifferent spectator into an eager and enthusiastic listener.

The same change which had taken place in the field of comedy and domestic drama was apparent in the tragic drama as well. From the far West a youth had come who bore a magical name, associated with the past glories of a great father, of whom he was said to be in every way worthy. Edwin Booth was hailed as the "Hope of the Living Drama" by the most careful of critics, and accepted by the public as the exemplar of the new idea in tragedy. His youth, beauty, and superior fitness marked him as a leader in the school of which he was to be the restorer, — the impulsive, passionate school of tragedy; stilted declamation and slow solemnity giving way before the "fiery onset" of this rapidly moving, nervous embodiment of all the passions. His appearance in New York in 1857 was the event which rallied to his side many of those who had been adherents of his great father, while the new auditors — the younger generation seeking for their ideal — found

it in this dark-haired, brown-eyed youth, who had seized the sceptre of the stage with an audacious hand, and was manifesting power to retain it. Edwin Booth in two years had attracted a following large in numbers, and of that class called "select" in quality, although there were those who scorned the claim that he was in any way the rival of the master who was now in retirement.

The hold which the new tragedian had taken upon the public, the interest which his youth and talent excited, the personal resemblance he bore in certain respects to the elder Booth, many of whose parts he played, — all these but added zest to the desire which had lately found open expression that the veteran should reappear. And when Forrest did step upon the stage again, it was to find that these changes had taken place in his retirement. He who had surpassed other generations of great actors, and outlived them all; he who had borne in triumph the high name of America's greatest tragedian for years unchallenged, — now confronted a changing taste, a new era, and a new rival. With the elder lay all the traditions of the old drama, with the younger all the elements which were fusing into the new. The one was supported and maintained by the generations which had grown up with the veteran, had seen the various stages of his career passed triumphantly, and who sought no improvement; the other represented the hopeful expression of the new generation which forms its own ideas by the impressions of its times, and is not slavishly bound to the past.

As yet all the glory lay with the veteran. The deep

interest which he had excited during the trial, the gossip of the idle, the admiration of the crowd, even the long retirement, only increased the curious interest which centred round his historic name; all the invectives which had been hurled against him by enemies, all the stories of his gloomy and despotic nature, all the caricatures which malice had created, all the humorous anecdotes of which he was the hero or the victim, only excited the curiosity of the public.

Upon his opening night, at Niblo's Garden, the seats were sold at auction, and the throngs which were turned away nightly from the doors exceeded those which found admittance. His engagement ran for one hundred nights, to be divided between many of the largest cities. He acted but three nights of each week, and his services were rewarded with one half of the gross receipts.

In New York he played "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Othello," "Macbeth," "Richard III.," "The Gladiator," "Damon and Pythias," "Richelieu," "Jack Cade," "Virginius," and "Metamora," supported by Frederick B. Conway (as the *Ghost*, *Iago*, and *Macduff*), Charles Fisher (as *Polonius*, first time, and *Cassio*), Daniel H. Harkins (as *Horatio*), John Chester (as *Roderigo*), Madame Ponisi (as *Queen Gertrude*, *Emilia*, and *Lady Macbeth*), and Mrs. F. B. Conway (as *Ophelia*, *Desdemona*, etc.).

His success in Philadelphia rivalled that of New York, and he closed his engagement with Mr. Nixon with a grand margin of profits to both. His performances in that city were confined to his Shaksperean parts by request, and the glad manager issued a con-

senting card to the public which demanded this concession. Even *Spartacus* and *Tell*, the *Broker* and *Cade*, were set aside for the immortal heroes of Shakspere.

The breaking out of the Rebellion gave a new impetus to the business of the theatres. The cities were filled by those who had heretofore lived a life of retirement in the provinces; the activity of reviving trade, based on the demand for supplies for the army, brought many play-goers to the cities, and the officers and soldiers on duty or on leave made up an addition to the resident public which accounted for the renewal of prosperity. To many of these Forrest was only known by his colossal fame, and eagerness to see him made his audiences larger than before. Prices were raised, and freely paid by the multitude who had for the first time an opportunity of gratifying a long-cherished wish. He played an enormous engagement under William Wheatley's management at Niblo's Garden in the autumn of 1862 with John McCullough, L. R. Shewell, J. G. Burnett, Edward Lamb, J. W. Collier, George Becks, Thomas E. Morris, Mrs. Mary Gladstane, Mrs. J. R. Scott, Madame Ponisi, Miss Mary Wells, and Miss Josephine Henry in his support; and under the same management appeared later in the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. In Boston the vast auditorium of the grandest theatre in America was found too small to contain the crowd he drew. He was more eager for expressions of approbation than ever; and one evening, some person having "hushed down" a rising demonstration of approval, he addressed the audience upon the

matter when the curtain fell and he was called to the front, saying that "applause was the reward of the artist, — that it was his due; and he who would rob him of it would pick a pocket."

Severe attacks of gout were beginning to tell upon that herculean form, sapping and undermining it; but he seemed to suffer no diminution of power in the great characters which so well suited him, and he was said to be acting better than ever before. His summers were, many of them, spent at Cohasset, near the ocean which he so dearly loved. Here with his friend Oakes the vacations passed as cheerfully as disease and carking reminders of the still impending lawsuit would permit. He had a keen sense of the sublime in nature, and once, standing on the beach as the sea rushed in with terrific power and dashed the spray about him, he exclaimed, "Let him who disbelieves in an Almighty Ruler stand here and be converted."

He was still growing more and more brusque and reserved. He hated demonstration or display of any kind, and was utterly careless of men's opinions as to his private behavior. Angry for some reason with Edwin Booth, who was his namesake, he publicly declined the salutation of the aged widow of his old friend Junius Brutus Booth, in order to mark his dislike for the son. Standing once in the crowded rotunda of the old Winthrop House on Tremont Street apart and alone, an enthusiastic acquaintance recognizing him rushed across the room and impulsively called him by name: "Why, my dear Forrest, how do you do?" Forrest muttered, "Pshaw," and abruptly turned away, where-

upon the disappointed and crestfallen man replied, "Well, sir, I 've heard you were rude and selfish, but I never supposed you were a brute till now." With an angry glare they separated.

His charities were as singular as his behavior at this time. He loved to perform such duties secretly, and disliked being reminded of them. It is said that his strange movements once attracted the attention and fired the curiosity of one of his friends, who had observed that he visited a certain poor neighborhood in New York, and always evaded reply when questioned on the subject. He was followed and traced to a miserable tenement, where he made a short stay, evidently desiring secrecy in his going and coming. Upon inquiry it was learned that he had found a worthy man who had met with disaster through illness. Forrest had given him a home for himself and his family, and never let him know even the name of his benefactor. When his friends afterwards alluded to this incident, and assured Forrest that his kindness was discovered, he replied, "You have taken from me the sweetest pleasure of my charity, and injured the family of that poor man. I will go there no more."

He gave his check for one thousand dollars for the use of the Sanitary Fund early in the war, and although a Democrat, and bitterly opposed to the party in power, he bore a sincere love for the Union, and never faltered in his belief in the perpetuity of our institutions. He refused to play for a benefit for the relief of a certain charity, but he sent privately his check for two hundred and fifty dollars to the committee. He thus

gained all the ignominy arising from the public announcement of his refusal to play, and left men ignorant of his private bounty.

He had grown more exacting than ever about his duty to his art, and more intolerant than ever of those who were negligent. His rebuke was unsparing for each offence against promptness, and oftentimes the quiet rehearsals were enlivened by an eloquent speech from the irate tragedian upon the charms of punctuality and the guilt of negligence.

John McCullough, then his chief support, gives an amusing account of one of his outbreaks. An actor was late for rehearsal, and the rest of the company, including the star, were compelled to await his arrival. He came at last, and was met by a storm of abuse from Forrest. He stammered out an excuse, but it availed nothing. Forrest went on excitedly, and, after animadverting upon the sin of indolence, said: "Mr. McCullough has been with me for years, he has never been for one moment late, and I hope, sir, you, who seem to require a model for your conduct, will imitate that gentleman." The rehearsal went on, and presently McCullough's cue for entrance was given. He came not! calls were made, minutes passed; there was an awful pause, during which the color came and went in Forrest's angry face. When the delay had become serious and the silence awful, the actor who had been advised to follow McCullough's example dared, slyly and maliciously, to approach the irate star and say, "Sir, you will have to give me a new model." Forrest, not deigning a reply, turned to the stage manager and

said: "Good God, sir, go on with the business, and send for McCullough!" The settlement with that gentleman, when they met, is described as a stormy one. This was not the first or last outbreak of Forrest which ended in his own defeat, the humor of others often turning aside his wrath.

In 1863 the writer of this memoir, then young in his profession, was supporting Mrs. D. P. Bowers at the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. Mr. Forrest was in retirement, living at his Broad Street home, but each evening he came to the theatre and occupied a box, an attentive listener. Before the close of the play on several occasions, he stepped behind the scenes and sent for the young actor. With a word of advice upon the higher or lower tone in a speech, or a correction of emphasis or pronunciation, perhaps now and then a word of praise, politely and shortly he would say "Good night," and leave abruptly. His suggestions were always gratefully received, and he seemed to take pleasure in repeating them. On one occasion, when he had sent in a card correcting a pronunciation, on the ground of the use of too many syllables in a certain word, and the reply went back doubting the truth of his hint, a reference was recommended to the dictionary, in which, it is needless to say, the veteran was found correct.

It was about this time, or a little earlier, that Barry Sullivan played an engagement at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. It was said that he possessed all the worst faults of Macready; and his innovations in the text of his parts and his mechanical style made him unpopular with Forrest, who perhaps saw in him

some of the qualities which recalled his quarrel with Macready, and hence he could do him no justice. He had shown his dislike of many changes in the production of "Hamlet" during the first two acts, as given by Sullivan, and his bearing had attracted the attention of Sullivan and the audience. *Hamlet* bided his time, and when he came to a point in the second act which he thought offered him the opportunity he wanted, he took *Guildenstern* and *Rosencrantz* aside, and, advancing towards the box in which Forrest sat, pointed his finger at him and said, in the words of the text, "Do you see that great baby, yonder? He is not yet out of his swaddling-clouts." Mingled hisses and applause were the actor's reward for what was certainly "a hit, a palpable hit," although perhaps not in the best of taste.

The new spirit which had entered the dramatic profession was inimical to the old actors, — to the old methods. English importations had filled the American theatres with men and women who returned Forrest scorn for scorn. England furnished the nursery for what is falsely called burlesque, — a style of performance which tickled the diseased palates of those who, by their encouragement, shared in the ignominy belonging to the performance. The votaries of this disgraceful school, who tried to attach themselves to the decent drama, made no scruple of holding up to derision all that was grand or noble in old plays or old players. Caricature imitations of the manner of Forrest provoked the laughter of the public; and no burlesque was complete which did not give some new feature of personal or mental characteristics of the tragedian. It is to the credit of

the American actors of to-day that all this innovation, which is now happily losing its savor, from simple inability to go further in slander, belongs to another nation, to another order. Against the reign of filth and all indecency, as represented in the orgies of the "Black Crook," or the naked inanities of the female burlesque or blond absurdities, Forrest, and the American stage generally, opposed the text of Shakspere, or that of the standard authors of Europe and America.

The review of this era of Forrest's life shows us the veteran going beyond the period of production, and approaching that in which his greatness matured. A new generation confirms or condemns the verdict of the past. Curiosity mingles with a love of the old literature and the old tragedies; and the past confronts the future on the threshold of the fleeting present. In 1865 Mr. Forrest had wellnigh reaped the harvest of his life, and had gained fresh laurels even while years of labor were telling upon the marked features, and age had whitened the once raven locks. Could he have stopped here; could the veteran have rested his claim to the regard of posterity upon the mature and healthy efforts of his life; could he have retired like Macready, while his body was as powerful as his giant mind,—then the sad sight of the neglected genius might have been spared us, and the historian's duty made more pleasing. One feeble glimmer lights up the decline of this great luminary, and then the night comes, and the end.

CHAPTER X.

HIS CALIFORNIA TRIP.

THE following letters will fittingly introduce the pages which treat of the engagement in California: —

"STATE CAPITOL, SACRAMENTO, April 20, 1857.

"RESPECTED SIR, — The undersigned, State officers and members of the Senate and Assembly, a small portion of your many admirers on the coast of the Pacific, avail themselves of this, the only mode under their control, of signifying to you the very high estimation as a gentleman and an actor in which you are generally and universally held by all who have a taste for the legitimate drama. Genuine taste and rigid criticism have united with the verdict of impartial history to pronounce you the head and leader of the noble profession to which you have consecrated abilities that would in any sphere of life render you eminent. We believe that so long as Shakspere is remembered and his words revered, your name, too, will be remembered with pride by all who glory in the triumphs of our Saxon literature.

"In conclusion, permit us to express the hope that your existing engagements will so far coincide with our wishes as to permit us at an early day to welcome you to the shores of the Pacific, assuring you of a warm and sincere reception, so far as our efforts can accomplish the same; and we feel that we but express the sentiments of every good citizen of the State."

This letter was signed by the Governor of California, the Lieutenant-Governor, Treasurer, Secretary of State, Comptroller of the State, twenty-seven members of the Senate, the Secretary and Sergeant-at-Arms, and by forty-eight members of the House of Representatives.

Edwin Forrest replied : —

"PHILADELPHIA, July 10, 1857.

"GENTLEMEN, — With a grateful pleasure I acknowledge your communication of April 20, delivered to me a short time since by the hands of Mr. Maguire. Your flattering invitation, so generously bestowed and so gracefully expressed, to enter the Golden Gate and visit your beautiful land, is one of the highest compliments I have ever received. It is an honor, I venture to say, that was never before conferred on one of my profession.

"It comes not from the lovers of the drama or men of letters merely, but from the Executives, the Representatives, and other high officials of a great State of the American Confederacy, and I shall ever regard it as one of the proudest compliments in all my professional career.

"Believe me, I deeply feel this mark of your kindness not as mere incense to professional or personal vanity, but as a proud tribute to that art which I have loved so well and followed so long.

> 'The youngest of the sister arts,
> Where all their beauty blends.'

This art, permit me to add, from my youth I have sought personally to elevate and professionally to improve, more from the truths in nature's infallible volume than from the pedantic words of the schools, — a volume open to all, and which needs neither Greek nor Latin lore to be understood.

"And now, gentlemen, although I greatly regret that it is not in my power to accept your invitation, I sincerely trust there will be a 'time for such a word,' when we may yet meet together under the roof of one of those proud temples consecrated to the drama by the taste and munificence of your fellow-citizens."

These letters, written in 1857, truly expressed the actor's belief that he would be unable to visit the Pacific coast, on account of the long journey and the hardships of the sea, which he ever dreaded; but in 1866 circumstances had changed his purpose, and caused him to face the long voyage and the verdict of a public which had appalled him before.

The previous year, while playing the part of *Damon* at the Holliday Street Theatre, in Baltimore, the weather being very cold and the theatre open to draughts, he was seized with a sudden illness, which was followed by very serious results. Suffering the most intense agony, he was able to get to the end of the part; but when his robes were laid aside and physicians summoned, it was found to his horror that he had suffered a partial paralysis of the sciatic nerve. In an instant the sturdy gait, the proud tread, of the herculean actor were forever gone; for he never regained complete control of his limb, a perceptible hobble being the legacy of the dreadful visitation. He still continued to act, however; but the painful stride, the pitiful jerk which accompanied his gait, the evident presence of the disease robbing him of free action in one arm and of one side of the body, were blots which stained the grand picture which he created in such parts as *Virginius*, *Cade*, and

Damon. His right hand was almost powerless, and he could not hold his sword. The public, always quick to detect the decline of power in a favorite, and too ready to forget past service, began to desert the theatre when the veteran appeared. He still played great engagements where he had not been seen of late years; but in the old cities his audiences grew more and more meagre, while those of his rivals were increased.

He now, in 1866, decided to go to California, urged again by the manager in San Francisco. He made every preparation for the journey, playing, meantime, in several of the Western cities. In Chicago he gave five performances at Crosby's Opera House, to an average of twenty-five hundred dollars nightly. This gratified him exceedingly, and consoled him for the mortifications he had endured elsewhere from public neglect. To James Oakes he wrote exultingly as follows: "Eighteen years since I acted here in a small theatre, of which the present Mayor of Chicago, J. B. Rice, Esq., was manager. The population, then about six thousand, is now one hundred and eighty thousand, with a theatre that would grace Naples, Florence, or Paris. The applause I have received here has been as enthusiastic as I have ever known, and the money return greater. It beats the history of the stage in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and New Orleans. Give me joy, my dear and steadfast friend, that the veteran does *not* lag superfluous on the stage."

The last line of the above letter shows the feeling of the worn and broken man, as he heard the diminishing

applause in his favorite cities. His marvel at the growth of Chicago in eighteen years would have been greater could he have lived until the census of 1880 was taken, when the population had increased to half a million souls, and the theatres to five equally fine edifices, all well patronized. In quarrelling with J. B. Rice Forrest lost the support of one of the noblest and truest men that ever lived; one whose advice and sturdy aid would have been a safe support in his trials, had he chosen to be guided by him.

In April, 1866, he went to San Francisco. At that time the trip was made by steamer from New York to Aspinwall, then by rail across the narrow strip of isthmus to Panama, where another steamer awaited to complete the voyage, which usually occupied about twenty-seven or thirty days. It was the only comfortable way of reaching the far West, as the overland route was then still perilous and full of hardships. Forrest was a poor sailor, and endless anecdotes are told of the humors of this trip arising out of his misery. The vessel on the Pacific side was commanded by Captain Bradbury (well known to his friends by the loving nickname "Yorick"), a type of the gentleman-sailor such as we still see on the Cunard or Inman line of steamers, — hospitable, courteous, but always attentive to duty. He was, besides, a great admirer of Forrest, and did all that lay in his power to make his journey pleasant. Forrest's immediate companions were Mr. McCullough, his chief support, and Mr. McArdle, his agent, — a congenial group. By the midnight watch-fire, when all the other passengers were asleep, or

around the table of "Yorick's" cabin, over a bowl of punch, many a happy hour was passed in song and jest or well-told anecdote. Forrest, however, suffered miserably from sea-sickness. On one occasion, worn out with the unceasing motion of the ship, each lurch seeming to wrench his very vitals, he cried out, "McArdle, McArdle! where are you?—"What is it, sir?"—"Tie her to a rock."—"Tie what, sir?"—"This cursed ship; do you hear me, tie her to a rock."—"But there are no rocks here, sir; we are in the middle of the Pacific Ocean."—"Then run the cursed ship ashore;" and with a groan the weary man turned his back to the bewildered McArdle and tried again to sleep. These fantastic outbursts seemed to afford him some relief, as they gave the cue for laughter to his sympathizing friends.

At last a cheerful and quiet Sunday came around. The sea was still, a cloudless sky above, a glassy mirror below, the ship ploughing her way peacefully through the water. Hardly had Forrest ventured on deck when Bradbury, McCullough, and some other kindred spirits resolved upon a practical joke as a relief to the tedium of the voyage. Forrest's dislike of the bigoted members of the Church has often been told, but his respect for the more advanced and liberal clergy is not so well known. Among the passengers was a loud-voiced exhorter who had begged on two former Sundays to be allowed to preach in the cabin. It was the custom of Captain Bradbury to read the service of the Church of England himself each Sunday to his ship's company; and as he had as little respect as Forrest for the Chad-

bands of the pulpit, he declined the request of the reverend gentleman. Upon this day, however, he relented, and resolved that the service should be for the benefit of Forrest. He urged Forrest to attend, assuring him that the divine was a well-known orator who could give an eloquent sermon, and, moreover, a brief one. After much entreaty, aided by the urgent advice of McCullough and his other friends, he consented to make one of the congregation in the cabin. To the divine now went Bradbury, told him that the profane play-actor, the renowned Forrest, was eager to hear him, and hoped he would make his sermon long. The delighted preacher consented, seeing a lost soul in the balance which he might happily save. Far down in the cabin, crowded in by the rest of the passengers, a long distance from the door, sat Forrest, surrounded by Bradbury, McCullough, and the others. Soon after the prosy exhorter began an officer of the ship came to the door of the cabin, and beckoned the captain, who stole softly out. McCullough soon responded to another call, and so on, until Forrest was left alone without a friend. Meanwhile the preacher thundered on in English fully an hour, then, to show his linguistic dexterity, he discoursed for half an hour in the Sandwich Islands dialect, the Kanaka. Each moral axiom, each word of hope to the lost soul, was given to Forrest directly, as if he were the only individual there for whom those words were spoken. The faces of the escaped ones appeared now and then at the window, but the glare of Forrest's eyes as he met theirs was ominous. When the agony was over, the jokers were not to be found until the wrath of

the irate tragedian had had time to subside and he was sufficiently calm to join heartily in the laughter against himself.

The long journey ended on the 3d of May, when he entered the lovely harbor of San Francisco, through whose Golden Gate he had hoped years before to pass. The people of that fair city, perhaps the most cosmopolitan in America, were eager to show their affection for this tragedian who had encountered such trials to bring them amusement. It was a novel experience. The veteran actor who had been famous when Telegraph Hill was a barren waste looking out on a silent bay, was now the guest of a city whose population numbered nearly a quarter of a million. The elements which formed the society of San Francisco and the whole State of California were collected from the remotest parts of America, and, indeed, of the whole world. Each State had sent out emigrants in search of gold, — men who could have reached the highest ranks in their own sections, but who now saw in the adventurous pursuit of wealth a field where energy might rapidly roll up riches, and they might return like the Indian nabob, to revel in their newly-acquired means in their old homes. These men had known, or had heard of, Forrest all their lives. Many of them had formed a part of his support in the audiences on the momentous occasion of his reappearance at the end of the eventful trial. All were critics, for they had not been so long in exile as to have forgotten their dramatic experiences, while the advantages which had been theirs in the East made them wise in the selection of

their idols. Their earliest actors were Junius Brutus Booth, James Stark, and Edwin Booth in the male tragic line; while Julia Dean, Laura Keene, Mrs. John Wood, Catherine Sinclair, and other well-known actresses were their dramatic heroines. The elder Booth had, comet-like, flashed across their sight, and given them the last glimmer of that irregular genius which was soon to be extinguished in dark night. James Murdoch had delighted the San Franciscans with those delicate impersonations of genteel comedy, the memory of which is now all that is left to us. In a word, the audience before whom Forrest was now to appear had all the experience of old theatre-goers, all the memories of the current theatre of their age, with none of the fashionable indifference to amusement which comes of satiety. It was then, as it has ever since remained, a community where no reputation will be taken blindly as a proof of excellence, but where merit, when proved and tried, will find a warmer recognition, a heartier welcome, a more vigorous acceptance perhaps, than in any other city of the Union. San Francisco has proved the grave of many a great reputation, the starting-point and outset of many a prosperous career. All the earlier fame of Davenport's *Hamlet* could not save that actor from the greatest humiliation of his life. The theatre, when he played there, was crowded at his opening, but empty before the end of the third act of the tragedy. They rejected Jefferson's estimate of his own powers, by turning him the cold shoulder when he appeared in two characters unworthy of his genius; but they were willing to canonize him when he at last honored him-

self and them by playing those classic parts of which he is, and has ever been, the greatest exponent.

Forrest was met by the heartiest of those San Francisco welcomes. Serenaded by night, the streets were thronged to catch a glimpse of him at the window; and when the actor's well-known face was seen, a shout went up which gladdened the veteran's heart. Old friends crowded about him to renew the memories of the past, and he must have felt that here, at least, his fame was secure and stable. Places for the opening night were sold at auction, and competition like that which had marked the Jenny Lind excitement in the East sent the price of the first choice of seats up to five hundred dollars, a sum which one eager friend and admirer gladly paid.

When the night of the 14th of May came, Washington Street was crowded for several blocks, long before the doors of the theatre were opened, and when at last the public was admitted, the few places left unsold and the "standing room only" were soon filled, while thousands were turned away disappointed, or lingered about the door to catch an echo of the applause which came from within. The play was "Richelieu." His reception when he came upon the stage as the old Cardinal was deafening. The whole audience rose and cheered the grand old actor, and it was several minutes before he could go on with the text. The reception inspired him, and he played with much of his old spirit; but the audience soon detected that the great man was no longer what he had been, the giant not so powerful as of yore. When the curtain fell, disappointment was

freely expressed by many, and even the memories of Stark and the then boyish efforts of Edwin Booth were recalled to the detriment of Edwin Forrest. A gradual decline in receipts showed a diminished attendance, until, at the end of thirty-five performances, he withdrew, leaving uncompleted sixty-five nights of his engagement.

During this time, owing to his ailments and his want of success on the stage, which convinced him of his failure to sustain the great fame which had preceded him, his temper became more harsh and exacting than ever. The property-man, bringing him the cup which held the sponge with blood for his face and hands in "Macbeth," was harshly asked, "What is this?" "Blood, sir," replied the terrified man. "Blood," thundered Forrest, examining the pinkish color of the liquid. "What an ass you must be not to know the color of blood, in a country where they kill a man a day!" and he dashed the innocent fluid to the floor. The trying changes of the climate increased his gouty and rheumatic troubles, and added to his moroseness. One day, being asked if his rheumatism was no better, he replied, "How can a man get better in a land where they have a climate every fifteen minutes!"

He went for relief to the Geysers, and was carried into the valley whose natural springs are the wonder of all travellers, unable to help himself, and never moving hand or foot without pain. He was lifted to the saddle of a Spanish pony by the strong hands of his attendants, then moved slowly along to what was known as the "Mud Bath," to whose healing qualities he owed

an almost instantaneous restoration to health. In September he wrote to his friend, James Oakes: —

"Here I am still enjoying the salubrious air of the mountains on horseback and afoot, and bathing in waters from the hot and cold springs which pour their affluent streams on every hand. My health is greatly improved, and my lameness is now scarcely perceptible. In a few weeks more I shall return to San Francisco to finish my engagement, which was interrupted by my late indisposition. My present intention is not to return to the East until next spring, for it would be too great a risk to encounter the rigors of a winter there which might prove disastrous. You are aware that the winter in San Francisco is much more agreeable than the summer, and after my professional engagement there I shall visit Sacramento, and some few other towns; and then go to Los Angelos, where I shall enjoy a climate quite equal to that of the tropics. I am determined to come back to you in perfect health. How I should like to take a tramp with you into the mountains this blessed day! I can give you no reasonable idea of the weather here. The skies are cloudless, save with rare and roseate shadows; not a drop of rain, and yet no drought, no aridity; the trees are fresh and green, and the air as exhilarating as champagne."

His recovery was almost miraculous, and he soon set out to visit the wonders of California, the mammoth trees, the valleys, and those glorious mountains whose names are enduring monuments of the great men after whom they are called. While hoping to return to San Francisco to complete his engagement, he received news of the dangerous illness of one of his sisters, and he resolved to start at once for home. On the 20th of

October he embarked, turning his back upon the new world before which he had offered his mature genius, and where his physical ailments had proved a barrier to his complete success. After an uneventful journey he reached Philadelphia at last, where in his own home, with his old friends, he told the story of his travels to loving and eager listeners.

CHAPTER XI.

HIS LAST APPEARANCE.

WHEN he had recovered his spirits after the return from San Francisco, Edwin Forrest resumed his profession. After forty years of experience in the easier and less arduous paths of the stage, he became again a Stroller, taking up the thread of his life where he had left it in those far-off Southern days, and weaving it into the web of his declining years. Into cities where his name had been spoken of with awe as the great master of the drama, where even actors of ordinary rank and merit disdained to play, Forrest now ventured, with companies organized only to make prominent the central figure, composed of support "caught up in the alarm of fear and hurry," and managed, often, by adventurers who cared nothing for the fame of the tragedian, save as an attraction to bring profit to themselves. He travelled for more than two full seasons, but was no longer able to give performances free from the taint of his bodily weakness, or of the fretful temper which was intensified by the discomforts of travel and by poor food. Those who saw him for the first time were disappointed, as they compared him with the herculean ideal which they had been

taught to expect. The poverty of his surroundings gave to the miserable picture an additional weight to drag him down, and where he hoped to leave a fresh mark of his giant powers, the result was often only bitter disappointment, endured in silence or expressed harshly in satirical epigrams.

Young writers, whose maiden pens had as yet dealt only with police reports or details of local interest, whose experience of the drama extended back to yesterday's visit to the circus or the hasty perusal of one of the stage editions of the text of some old play, now became eloquent as they fleshed their maiden swords in the old and worn armor of the dying gladiator. In every town he was assailed by some local wonder, with downy lip, who now saw through what he called the shallow disguise of an artist whose genius had inspired the admiration of the oldest and wisest critics of the land; and he found in one of the most remote of villages to which he had penetrated, led by the adventurous spirit of the money-seeking manager, a young writer who, after having for several days written the coarsest abuse of Forrest, boasted openly that "he had driven the driveller from the stage."

Faults which would have disgraced the merest tyro in the art were unscrupulously attributed to Forrest. All the cries which the school of immaculate tragedy had of old used against him were quoted anew; "robust," "howling," "tiger," were common epithets by which the grand old man was greeted; and all his old service seemed forgotten.

It was indeed strange that he should have lingered so

long before the public, that having outlived his vigor he should have acted when his powers had declined, and when he could no longer give complete and perfect representations of the grand heroes with whom he was identified; but Forrest was not free from the delusion which has ever clung to the hearts of actors, that there exists a sentimental union between the public and the artist. When the force is gone which was once able to give perfect performances, the public too often forgets the glories of the past in the shortcomings of the present. Acting for which an apology must be offered is already condemned, and no service in former days will excuse defects in these. The relation of audience and player is purely a professional one, and the interest which the public has for an actor is that which arises from a pleasure felt in the perfect performance of duty; but while the audiences easily lay aside or forget their favorites, the sensitive actor too often accepts applause as a personal tribute, never to be withheld, until he awakes to the reality with a bitter sense of what he considers the fickleness of the multitude.

Into this error Forrest fell. The idol of four generations could not realize that a fifth would hesitate to accept his great fame, and presume to demand that he should be equal to that reputation, even now in his old age. Infirmity and disease were good reasons why he should abstain from acting, but they were poor excuses for blemished pictures.

In many places he had hardly been heard of, and he was often mortified to see that the box-office told a humiliating story of his want of popularity. He began

to set as much value upon a favorable notice now, no matter who was the writer, as he once did upon metropolitan criticisms, such as those of "Colley Cibber" in his own city. His scrap-book contains, carefully preserved by the side of a splendid analysis of Leggett's or Raymond's, a long, windy effusion of some obscure country novice in dramatic writing.

His old enemy the gout grew stronger, and the cold weather caused him intense suffering. He was compelled often to forfeit his engagements for a time, and take an inverval of rest at some obscure hotel, where poor fare and lonely surroundings only increased his malady and added to his moroseness. In reply to a telegram from a Western manager who asked him if he would play in his city, and for how long, he answered, "Ten nights if the weather is temperate; ten minutes if it is cold." Shivering beside a cheerless stove behind the scenes of a theatre of a far Western town, he exclaimed, "I am worth three hundred thousand pounds sterling, and I can't purchase five cents' worth of heat for my body!" Dressed one cold night in St. Louis for *Virginius*, in which he stood almost nakedly exposed to the cold air which entered the theatre by a thousand neglected crannies, he muttered to himself shiveringly, "I wish I wore paddings on my legs." A wag who stood near and overheard him said softly to him, "Why don't you, sir?" With a laugh as he glanced down upon his magnificent proportions, his good-nature returned, and the cold was for the time forgotten.

As his gait grew more and more feeble, he was compelled to resort to artifice to conceal his infirmities;

and one of his companions tells a touching story of his suffering in this direction. He had always been used in the last scene of "Damon and Pythias" to leap out of the arms of *Pythias*, at the voice of *Dionysius*, and to spring upon the scaffold with a gymnast's agility and perfect grace. Each night now it was his custom to inspect the platform and try this jump before the rise of the curtain. The height — ordinarily three feet — had been gradually lessened at each performance, until, at last, one night it was found that he could not make his step until it had been cut down to three inches. Being asked if it would do, he said, sadly, "Yes;" and turned away to hide the tears that fell as he thought of his decaying manhood. His performances, robbed of the activity of youth or the graceful movements of mature age, became, on most occasions, declamatory exhibitions in costume.

In the larger cities of the East, which he had neglected for years, he was almost forgotten, save by those older theatre-goers to whom the new drama was a stranger. The traditions of the stage were passing into new hands. The Shaksperean plays were receiving pictorial interpretation and an unusual scholastic treatment which somewhat atoned for the absence of vigor in the actors. He who had borne the banner of the old school and carried the standard into the camp of the foreigner was now a forgotten veteran, who had surrendered into younger hands the battle-flag of old. He was present one afternoon at one of the famous revivals at Booth's Theatre. It was reported in the wings that the old master was in a back seat of the second

gallery, grimly watching the pictorial embellishments of one of his own great characters. Mr. Booth, on hearing this, immediately despatched his business manager to offer him the use of the stage-box. They were not on speaking terms, but Booth felt he was but doing his duty to a veteran hero. Stepping softly behind Forrest, the manager touched him on the shoulder, and said, "Is this Mr. Forrest?" "No," growled he, as he turned away and resumed his observation of the play. Riding with him shortly after the revival of "Julius Cæsar" at Booth's Theatre, in which the writer had borne a part, the question of scenic embellishment and pictorial fidelity to place and costume were discussed. He gave vent, good-naturedly, to his own prejudices against what he called the "scene-painter's drama," and said that he preferred to play even *Coriolanus* in a simple but appropriate setting, to all the gaudy kickshaws by which modern dramatic art is swaddled and smothered.

To add to his trials during these years, he was called upon to part with his beloved sister Caroline. She died in 1869. He wrote: "Caroline died last night. We have a sad house. Why, under such bereavements, has God not given us some comforting, reasonable hope in the future where these severed ties of friendship and love may be again united? Man's vanity and self-love have betrayed him into such a belief, but who knows that the fact substantiates it?"

In 1871 Eleanora, the last of his little family at home, passed away. He wrote: "My sister Eleanora is dead, and there is now no one on earth whose veins bear

blood like mine. My heart is desolate." He stood beside his hearth-stone alone and hopeless.

We are coming now to the last theatrical performances of the first and greatest of American actors. In 1871 and 1872 he made one of the supreme efforts of his life. His labors were amazing, his travels a marvel, when the state of his health is considered, and his financial success surprising even for one so used to fortune. His last performances were pronounced by his old admirers equal to his earlier ones, and it was claimed that his fires flashed with their wonted splendors before expiring forever. During this last season he played successively in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Columbus, New Orleans, Nashville, Galveston, Houston, Omaha, Memphis, Kansas City, St. Louis, Quincy, Pittsburg, Cleveland, Buffalo, Detroit, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Troy, and Albany.

His last engagement in New York took place in February, 1871. He played *Lear* and *Richelieu*, his two greatest parts. The supporting company was poor, the theatre — the Lyceum, on Fourteenth Street — unpopular, and the weather unusually severe. There is something absolutely pathetic in this engagement, so inauspiciously closing a service of half a century. The newspapers gave an impressive emphasis to the occasion, and the voice of malice was hushed in the presence of that strange spectacle of a great light going out in flickers of its old brightness, giving forth only rare intermittent flashes. The veteran writes to his faithful Oakes: "Well, I am here in New York once more, and on Monday next begin again my professional

labors, — labors begun more than forty years ago in the same city. What changes since then in men and things! Will any one of that great and enthusiastic audience which greeted my efforts as a boy be here on Monday evening next to witness the matured performances of the man? If so, how I should like to hear from his own lips if the promises of springtime have been entirely fulfilled by the fruits of the autumn of life!"

This letter shows how little heed he paid to the crippled gait, the feeble hand, and the weakened physique which had once answered the call of his commanding brain. No words can so well describe the impressions of these final performances as those in which Winter and Sedley, Stuart and Moray, used in writing of them. Extracts are offered here: —

"Never were plaudits better deserved by any actor than those which have been showered down upon Forrest during the past week. In his prime, when theatres were crowded by the brightest and fairest of America, who listened spellbound to the favorite of the hour, he never played this character half so well. He was for the moment *Lear*, but not Shakspere's old man; he was Forrest's *Lear*. Seeing and hearing him under the disadvantages of a mangled text, a poor company, a miserable *mise en scène*, and a thin house, the visitor must still be impressed by the one grand central figure, so eloquent, so strong, so sweet in gentlest pathos. He is the King Lear of the American stage; he gave to his children, the public, all that he had, and now they have deserted him. They have crowned a new king, before whom they bow, and the 'old man eloquent' is cheered by few voices. The con-

sciousness of his royal nature supports him, but still he is deserted and alone. He bowed his head slightly in response to the acclamations of those scantily filled seats. But throughout the play there was an added dignity of sorrow, which showed that the neglect of the public had wounded him. He knew his fate. He recognized that he was a discrowned king, and that the fickle public had crowned another not worthy of sovereignty and having no sceptre of true genius. Actors may come and actors may go, but it will be centuries before a *Lear* arise like unto this man Forrest, whom the public seems to have so nearly forgotten."

Writers who had formerly used little delicacy in expressing their censure of his performance now spoke with tenderness and affection of these last fruits of his genius, and recognized a mellowness in tone, and a sadness as of a near farewell, which touched the heart and silenced harsh thoughts. He had lived through a manhood of hard, unsympathetic experience into an age when pity mingled with reverence for duty done. After twenty nights the curtain fell for the last time between Edwin Forrest and a New York audience. But his final stage appearance was yet to come, and it should be approached with a tender sentiment of the loss which was so soon to befall the American drama in the farewell of its grandest performer.

On the night of March 25, 1872, Forrest opened in *Lear* at the Globe Theatre, Boston. The house was crowded to suffocation, and the applause which greeted him was the most flattering tribute of his career. From Mr. Alger's ample biography we quote this letter from a "distinguished author" who was present: —

"I went last night to see Forrest. I saw *Lear* himself; and never can I forget him, the poor, discrowned, wandering king, whose every look and tone went to the heart. Though mimic sorrows latterly have little power over me, I could not suppress my tears in the last scene. The tones of the heart-broken father linger in my ear like the echo of a distant strain of sad, sweet music, inexpressibly mournful yet sublime. The whole picture will stay in my memory so long as soul and body hang together."

"Lear" was played six nights. During the second week he was announced for *Richelieu* and *Virginius;* but he caught a violent cold on Sunday, and labored sorely on Monday evening through the part of *Richelieu*. On Tuesday he repeated the performance, against the advice of friends and physicians. Rare bursts of his old power lighted up the play, but he labored piteously on against his increasing illness and threatened pneumonia. When stimulants were offered he rejected them, declaring "that if he died to-night he should still be his old royal self."

Announced for *Virginius* the following evening, he was unable to appear. A severe attack of pneumonia developed itself; he was carried to his hotel, and his last engagement was brought to an abrupt and melancholy end.

A few printed opinions of Forrest's acting, expressed at different periods during his long career by fully competent critics, may prove not without interest here, as showing the regard in which he was held by men of various classes and conditions on both sides of the Atlantic.

Mr. Phelps, in his "Players of a Century" (Albany, 1880), quotes from the *Albany Advertiser*, October 25, 1825, a criticism of Forrest, — one of the earliest disinterested ones that are preserved: —

"Mr. Forrest is a stranger to us; we are ignorant whether he be a native of this country or of England; upon himself it depends to do honor to the country which gave him birth. Nature has been bountiful to him. His face and figure are such as to prepossess an audience in his favor; his voice (with the single exception of Mr. Cooper's) is, we think, superior to any we have ever heard. This young gentleman we have followed with interest through *Jaffier*, *Mark Antony*, and the *Indian Chief* in Noah's play, "She Would be a Soldier." *Mark Antony* and the *Indian Warrior* evince, in addition to Mr. Forrest's great natural gifts, a degree of study too often neglected by young actors, and to this circumstance do we attribute the extreme rarity of great histrionic talents combined with the charms and graces of youth. If this young gentleman will listen to the voice of truth, and avoid the destructive school of vanity (which has ruined so many who promised greatly), few, aye, a very few, years will place him in the ranks with our own Cooper, and with these highly gifted strangers, Conway, Booth, and Kean, who of late have 'thrown' a halo over the American stage."

Macready, in his "Reminiscences," writes: —

". . . Forrest was the *Mark Antony*. He was a very young man, — not more, I believe, than one or two and twenty. The 'Bowery lads,' as they are termed, made great accounts of him, and he certainly was possessed of remarkable qualifications. His figure was good, although perhaps a little too heavy; his face might be considered handsome, his voice excellent. He was gifted with ex-

traordinary strength of limb, to which he omitted no opportunity of giving prominence. He had received only the commonest education, but in his reading of the text he showed the discernment and good sense of an intellect much upon a level with that of Conway ; but he had more energy, and was altogether distinguished by powers that might, under proper direction, be productive of great effect. I saw him again in *William Tell.* His performance was marked by vehemence and rude force that told upon his hearers ; but of pathos in the affecting interview with his son there was not the slightest touch, and it was evident he had not rightly understood some passages of the text. My observation of him was not hastily pronounced. My impression was that, possessed of natural requisites in no ordinary degree, he might, under careful discipline, confidently look forward to eminence in his profession. If he would give himself up to a severe study of his art, and improve himself by the practice he would obtain before the audiences of the principal theatres of Great Britain, he might make himself a first-rate actor. But to such a course of self-denying training I was certain he never would submit, as its necessity would not be made apparent to him. The injudicious and ignorant flattery and the factious applause of his supporters in low-priced theatres would fill his purse, would blind him to his deficiency in taste and judgment, and satisfy his vanity, confirming his self-opinion of attained perfection. I spoke of him constantly as a young man of unquestionable promise, but I doubted his submission to the inexorable conditions for reaching excellence. The event has been as I anticipated. His robustious style gains applause in the coarse melodramas of "Spartacus" and "Metamora," but the traits of character in Shakspere and the poetry of the legitimate drama are beyond his grasp. My forebodings were prophetic."

Mr. George Vandenhoff, in his "Leaves from an Actor's Note Book," writing of Forrest in 1842, says: —

"I was taken by one of his great admirers to see him as *Metamora*, and was surprised to find the house (the old Chatham Theatre) more than three-fourths empty. He, however, acted with his accustomed vigor; and I freely acknowledge that, for power of destructive energy, I never heard anything on the stage so tremendous in its sustained *crescendo* swell, and crushing force of utterance, as his defiance of the Council in that play. His voice surged and roared like the angry sea lashed into fury by a storm, till, as it reached its boiling, seething climax, in which the serpent hiss of hate was heard at intervals amidst its louder, deeper, hoarser tones, it was like the Falls of Niagara, in its tremendous down-sweeping cadence: it was a whirlwind, a tornado, a cataract of illimitable rage."

In 1848, Douglas Jerrold wrote of Forrest's *Lear*: —

"A more thoughtful, feeling, and artistic display of genuine acting we never witnessed. From the first scene to the last he was the *Lear* of our immortal bard. Not a line, look, or gesture told of Mr. Forrest, but *Lear* was *Lear* from the first scene to the last. We never saw madness so perfectly portrayed. It is true to nature — painfully so; and to the utter absence of mannerism, affectation, noisy declamation, and striving for effect, may, nay must, be attributed the histrionic triumph achieved by Mr. Forrest in this difficult part. By this display of Thursday evening Mr. Forrest has stamped himself a man of genius. We candidly confess we did not think it was in him, and we were much electrified, as was every one in the house. The whole audience, in fact, was taken by surprise; and the unanimous cheering at the conclusion of each act must

Philadelphia,
May 23/71.

Gabriel Harrison Esq.
My dear Sir.

I fear you thought I had forgotten to send you the photo-graph of Lear, as I had promised to do. It is not so, but I have had so much to occupy me, that I could not attend to it until yesterday, when I ordered it to be boxed and sent to you by Express.

I think it one of the finest heads of Lear I have ever pictured. You will observe it is somewhat different from that one, I presented when I acted the part in New York last, ~~It has not the bald~~ forehead, which I have now adopted.

As I told you before, when-

Speaking of the picture: I think the right eye brow is somewhat exaggerated, owing to the too hasty "make up": but otherwise I think it perfect, and the expression of insanity in the eyes, is one of the masterly triumphs of our most difficult art.

When you receive the picture, let me know what you think of it - without fear or favour.

Yours truly,

Edwin Forrest

have convinced Mr. Forrest how much his performance was appreciated. He must have been gratified, for the expressions of delight which greeted him were as heartfelt as they were merited. The imprecation at the conclusion of the first act was most impressively and admirably delivered, and drew down thunders of applause from one and all. We never heard this awful curse so powerfully uttered. It was dreadful from its intenseness and reality. Had we space, we could point out numberless excellences in Mr. Forrest's performance. A more talented exhibition we never wish to see; it is impossible to imagine anything more intellectual. The care and study bestowed upon this part must have been great, and the actor has identified himself most completely with it. It is refreshing now-a-days to see one of Shakspere's plays so brought before us, and we feel exceedingly obliged to Mr. Forrest for having reminded us of the palmy days of Kemble and Kean; and when we add that his *Lear* is equal in every respect to that of the two mighty tragedians, whose names are hallowed by the admirers of genius, we think we can scarcely bestow higher praise."

Henry F. Chorley wrote of him after his first engagement in London: —

"However much Macready nerves one at the time by the subtle intellect of his personifications, I am never much the better for it afterwards, — never find a word, a look, or an attitude written on my heart. There are certain points of Mr. Forrest's playing that I shall never forget, to my dying day. There is a force without violence in his passionate parts, which he owes much to his physical conformation; but which, thrown into the body of an infirm old king (his *Lear* was very kingly), is most awful and withering; as, for instance, where he slides down upon his knees, with —

'For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child, Cordelia.'"

Mr. Wemyss, in his "Theatrical Biography" (1848), gives the following opinion of Mr. Forrest's acting: —

"Mr. Forrest's Shaksperean characters, with the exception of *Othello*, where his terrific energy in the third and fourth acts holds his audience in breathless amazement, are not above mediocrity; his *Richard the Third* and his *Macbeth* do not even deserve the name; but in these characters which have been written for him, in which his physical requisites have been brought into play in the most favorable manner, he maintains a reputation which will be cherished so long as the American drama, of which he may be called the founder, shall exist."

James E. Murdoch, in "The Stage," writes: —

"The acting of Forrest was natural, impulsive, and ardent, because he was not so well trained as his English rivals in what may be termed a false refinement. Forrest was not considered as polished an actor as Macready, and was often charged with rudeness and violence in his impersonations, and even ridiculed for muscularity of manner; and yet I never knew a tragedian who did not use all his physical power in reaching the climax of his most impassioned delineations. It must be remembered that Mr. Forrest was a strong man, and when excited his passions appeared more extreme than those of one more delicately organized; and unqualified condemnation was only heard from those who were either unable or unwilling to perceive that the traits which distinguished our then young actor were really more natural than the elaborate presentations and precise mannerisms of Macready. . . . Although Forrest in his youth had only received what was then called a good school training, he furnished in

his manhood an example of what might have been profitably imitated by the young men of his time who, with all of the advantages of collegiate education, failed to exhibit the progressive intellectual improvement which steadily marked his course from year to year. Many who did not admire his earlier dramatic performances were greatly impressed with his manner in the later parts of his career, his impersonation of *Lear* being generally considered the crowning point of his excellence. Mr. Longfellow, who did not admire Mr. Forrest as *Jack Cade* or *The Gladiator*, speaking of his *Lear*, said it was a noble performance, well worthy the admiration of the lovers of good acting."

Mr. Charles T. Congdon, in his "Reminiscences of a Journalist" (1880), writes: —

"The transition from this delicate triumph of the dramatic art to the gladiatorial exhibitions of Mr. Edwin Forrest is like passing from the musical meadows of Arcadia to the fields of Bashan, resonant with bovine bellowers. As an American, I am under constitutional obligations to declare Mr. Forrest the finest tragic actor of this or of any age; but as a man and a critic, I resolutely refuse to say anything of the sort. 'If this be treason,' as Patrick Henry said, 'make the most of it!' Fanny Kemble, somewhere about 1832, during her first theatrical triumphs in the United States, went down to the Bowery Theatre to see the young tragedian about whom there was so much talk; and I think her sole criticism upon him in her diary is, 'What a mountain of a man!' Well, he was tall and he was muscular. Such calves as his I have seldom seen. It was with admirable instinct that Dr. Bird wrote for this large person the play of 'The Gladiator.' He was born for single combat. The *Macduff* with whom he contended had a hard time of it, nor did he easily succumb to the

most valiant *Richmond*. Supernumeraries did not like to be handled by him when the business required pulling about and mauling. The *Messenger* in 'Damon and Pythias' always played the part at the risk of his bones when Mr. Forrest delineated the patriotic Syracusian. Of course, all this mastodonian muscularity was a disadvantage in characters of predominating intellect, like *Hamlet*, with which our actor never meddled without reminding us of a bull in a china-shop. The merits of Mr. Forrest were those which might be acquired by long experience of the stage, and by many opportunities of practising at the expense of the public. Sometimes, when he had only to manage a few lengths of stately declamation, he succeeded in making an impression upon the judicious. With such a frame, and a good costume, it would have been strange if he had altogether missed dignity; but he was not over-burthened with intellectual perceptions, and, generally speaking, whatever he played he was the same man. One remembers him, not as *Macbeth*, nor even as *Spartacus* or *Metamora*, but as the Great American Tragedian. Actors are not usually good judges of dramas; but it would be impossible for a player of the least literary instinct to go on acting year after year in such a farrago of bombast and bad rhetoric as poor John Augustus Stone's aboriginal drama of 'Metamora.' Mr. Stone did what he could to atone for the injury which he had inflicted upon the world by the production of this play and another, equally bad, which he wrote for Yankee Hill. He drowned himself on June 1, 1834, in the Schuylkill River. We will accept the presumptive apology. Mr. Forrest went on playing those parts specially written for his private legs and larynx, to the end. One does not understand why he did not lay them aside after the full development of his Shaksperean aspirations. I think that he had dim notions of the faults of his acting, and

that he tried a little to be less outrageous; but he was rather worse when he attempted to be quiet than when he o'erdid Termagant and out-Heroded Herod. Any attempt to utter anything *sotto voce* instantly suggested suffocation. Nor could Mr. Forrest move his ponderous limbs with ease, except in garments of the loosest description; in a part like *Claude Melnotte*, demanding modern apparel, he was like the Farnese Hercules in a dress-coat. He had some original business, but it was not good; even if it had been better, he would have spoiled it by over-consciousness and by thrusting it upon the attention of the house."

Hon. Wm. B. Maclay, of New York, after Forrest's death, wrote: —

"Some friends of Mr. Forrest wishing to have a marble statue of him in one of his characters, and long divided in opinion which one to select, ultimately decided upon *Coriolanus*, in accordance with the actor's own preference. It was indeed a character worthy of being classed with his *Lear*, *Damon*, and *Richelieu*. I first saw him in the part at the old Park, in 1837. He was never a favorite at that theatre, and only three years before he had played an engagement there to very poor houses, as the receipts of the treasury, that unerring barometer, show. For "Hamlet," $362.75; "King Lear," $205; "Othello," $385; while the engagement of Fanny Kemble, immediately following, was a remarkable contrast. Her *Lady Macbeth* drew to the treasury $1,129.50; *Bianca*, $765; and "The Hunchback," $1,526.50. After an interval of many years Forrest appeared as *Coriolanus* at the Broadway Theatre, in one of the longest and most successful of his engagements in New York. Any careful observer who had had the advantage of seeing him on both the

occasions when he played the part must have been impressed with the more perfect conception of the poet which additional study and experience of the stage enabled him to present. Sir Walter Scott deemed it fortunate that Kemble had never seen Garrick in *Hamlet*. It was no disadvantage to Forrest that he had never seen any of his predecessors, good or bad, in the character of *Coriolanus*. We were spared a copy, a substitute, an imitation. Instead of following the line of precedents, he had surrendered himself to reflection and study as guides to a mastery of the character. Throughout the whole performance there was a freshness, a vigor, an individuality which distinguished it from any other, and which afforded a remarkable illustration of the scope for differing, yet original conceptions that have given to the drama such deserved pre-eminence among the imitative arts. So admirable was this delineation, that the spectator lost sight of the actor. He saw Forrest, but thought only of *Coriolanus*. He was transported to the heart-stirring siege of Corioli, stood in the market-place in Rome, mingled in the procession to the Capitol, and felt appalled when he beheld the illustrious exile standing in majestic silence before the statue of Mars. . . . But the crowning triumph of Forrest was in the closing scene of Act III., when the banishment of *Coriolanus* is announced by *Brutus*, amid the huzzas of the populace. The stage of the Broadway Theatre had even more than the usual gradual elevation as it receded from the footlights. In the position where Forrest stood he seemed to have acquired additional height, as with flashing eyes and dilated form he rushed towards the retreating rabble, and thundered out his concentrated scorn in the exclamation, 'I banish *you!*' He repeated the line, 'There *is* a world elsewhere,' with the stress laid upon the word we have italicized. The idea of the poet could perhaps have been more truly rendered by

the delivery of the passage in a self-reliant monotone, or with the emphasis, if any, upon the word *elsewhere;* but this was only like a spot upon the sun. His reading in all else evinced a careful, and in many instances a subtle, analysis of the text; and his good taste led him to restore the beautiful passage, —

> 'My mother, oh,
> You have won a happy victory to Rome;
> But for your son, believe it, I believe it,
> Most dangerously with him you have prevailed.'

Its simple pathos did not save it in Kemble's adaptations, nor is it in any other copy of the acted play with which we are acquainted."

CHAPTER XII.

LAST SCENE OF ALL.

ON the evening of April 2, 1872, at the Globe Theatre, Boston, Edwin Forrest closed his dramatic career. The last words of *Richelieu*, as the drop-curtain fell, "So ends it," seemed to be the fitting farewell of the grand old Cardinal's noblest representative. Shut out from the view of the public he had served so faithfully for fifty years, he passed into the sick-room, and found comfort in the tender nursing of his personal friends. A few days of care and rest did much to restore to his frame the health and vigor which never before had failed him, and enabled him disdainfully to shake off the disease. As soon as he was able to move, he left for his home in Philadelphia, resting on his way only a day in New York. In the quiet of his study and in the society of a few congenial men he spent the summer months, gaining new strength every day, and hoping for fresh triumphs before the close of his life. He could not, in the face of his infirmity of gait, however, venture to play any of his heroic characters, and his friends saw little to encourage them in the hope that he would ever be able to resume his profession. But the spirit of the old warrior was in him still,

and not even the warnings of his last attack were sufficient to keep him in his well-earned retirement. As the summer passed away, the desire for work and action grew stronger and stronger, and he decided to re-enter public life, but simply as a reader of the great plays in which he had, as an actor, been so successful. His voice was still the old powerful instrument of his will, which he could command to instant obedience; while the clear intellect could still guide its matchless tones in subtle and entrancing harmonies. In his imagination he saw grouped before him a new generation of scholars, hanging upon his words, while the veterans who had held to him through good and evil report, against the allurements of change and the claims of younger rivals, would swell the throng. He had still a lively interest in all dramatic matters, and a strong belief in the bright future of the American stage, although he saw his own usefulness near its end.

His first reading was given at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. The large theatre was only half filled. His selection was "Hamlet." The result was a disappointment to his listeners; and that it was so, he fully realized. He felt that his power to charm an audience had gone from him. While his grand voice was unchanged, the other qualities of his popularity had vanished. He had left them on the sick-bed from which he had so lately risen, and they were never to return. His engagements took him to Wilmington, Delaware, and later to New York. In Steinway Hall, in the city that had been the scene of his greatest successes in times past, his audiences were pitifully small, although not

unappreciative. He went to Boston, and there at Tremont Temple, on the 7th of December, 1872, he made his last appeal to the public in the capacity of a reader, or in any capacity, closing his book upon *Othello's* death, Othello's occupation forever gone. He felt keenly the realization of the fact that even the dim glories of the reader's desk were denied to him in his old age and failing strength; and mournfully he turned his face once more towards his home. The hand of his friend Oakes was the last he pressed, and sadly prophetic were his farewell words, "Another parting, my friend. The final parting must come some time. I will probably be the first to die." They never met in life again. Forrest reached Philadelphia on the 9th of December, and on the 11th wrote to Oakes his last letter, saying sadly but fondly, "God bless you ever, my dear and much valued friend."

On this evening he had gone to rest seemingly in his accustomed health, showing no signs of unusual weakness, and in no way attracting particularly the attention of his household. When the morning of the 12th of December came, his servant, hearing no sound in his chamber at his general hour of rising, became alarmed, opened his master's door, and found there, cold in death upon his bed, the form of the great tragedian. He was partially dressed, and evidently had taken his customary exercise with a pair of small dumb-bells. His arms were crossed upon his bosom, and he seemed to be at rest. The stroke had come suddenly. With little warning, and without pain, he had passed away. Concerning the immediate cause of his death a Philadelphia

correspondent of the *New York Herald* wrote as follows to that journal: —

"Dr. Gross, a surgeon of note in this city, in his certificate of death, says, 'Cause, apparently apoplexy of the brain.' From what I learn from the servants, I incline to the belief that Mr. Forrest burst a blood-vessel. It was a very favorite habit of his to dress himself in the morning, with the exception of his coat, and stretching himself on his back in bed, in front of a movable mirror, exercise with a pair of eight-pound dumb-bells. When found yesterday the dumb-bells were lying at his side. The cook says, 'A red streak appeared at the side of his neck just before he died.' It would appear from this that he had been taking his accustomed exercise, and possibly with more violence than usual, and had burst a blood-vessel when attempting to rise from a reclining position."

His few intimates in Philadelphia were immediately summoned, among them the faithful Rees, the constant Dougherty, and they at once sent by telegraph for Oakes, to whom the news of his friend's death was a dreadful shock, — a thunderbolt from a clear sky. That Edwin Forrest was dead was quickly known throughout the city; the fact was whispered in hotel corridors, it was mooted on 'change, it was the common topic of the streets; and that an event of unusual importance had taken place was read in men's faces, was felt in men's talk. The electric wire flashed the news to the remotest ends of the country; and wherever the drama had a lover, wherever the reader of Shakspere was found, the loss of the master's greatest exponent was sincerely mourned. Stricken down in the prime of his

manhood, taken away without a moment's warning, the news was scarcely credited. No description of the last scene of all can be better than that of his friend and biographer, Mr. Alger, who thus writes : —

"Arrangements were made for a simple and unostentatious funeral, a modest card of invitation being sent to only about sixty of his nearest friends or associates in private or professional life. But it was found necessary to forego the design of a quiet and reserved burial, on account of the multitudes who felt so deep an interest in the occasion, and expressed so strong a desire to be present at the last services, that they could not be refused admission. When the hour arrived, on that dark and rainy December day, the heavens muffled in black, and weeping as if they felt with the human gloom below, the streets were blocked with the crowd, all anxious to see once more, ere it was borne forever from sight, the memorable form and face. The doors were thrown open to them, and it was estimated that nearly two thousand people, in steady stream, flowed in and out; each one in turn taking his final gaze. The house was draped in mourning, and profusely filled with flowers. In a casket covered with a black cloth, silver-mounted, and with six silver handles, clothed in a black dress-suit, reposed the dead actor. Every trace of passion and of pain was gone from the firm and fair countenance, looking strikingly like life, whose placid repose nothing could ever disturb again. All over the body and the casket, and around it, were heaped floral tributes in every form, sent from far and near, — crosses, wreaths, crowns, and careless clusters. From four actresses in four different cities came a cross of red and white roses, a basket of evergreens, a wreath of japonicas, and a crown of white camellias. Delegations from various dramatic associations

were present: a large deputation of the Lotus Club came from New York, with the mayor of that city at their head. All classes were there, from the most distinguished to the most humble. Many of the old steadfast friends of other days passed the coffin, and looked their last upon its occupant with dripping eyes. One, a life-long professional coadjutor, stooped and kissed the clay-cold brow. Several poor men and women who had been blessed by his silent charities touched every heart by the deep grief they showed. And the household servants wept aloud at parting from the old master, who had made himself earnestly loved by them.

"The only inscription on the coffin-lid was the words,—

EDWIN FORREST,

BORN MARCH 9, 1806. DIED DECEMBER 12, 1872.

"The pall-bearers were James Oakes, James Lawson, Daniel Dougherty, John W. Forney, Jesse R. Burden, Samuel D. Goss, George W. Childs, and James Page. The funeral *cortége*, consisting of some sixty carriages, moved through throngs of people lining the sidewalk, along the way to St. Paul's Church, where the crowd was so great, notwithstanding the rain, as to cause some delay. It seemed as though the very reserve and retiracy of the man in his last years had increased the latent popular curiosity about him, investing him with a kind of mystery. A simple prayer was read; and then, in the family vault, with the coffined and mouldering forms of his father and mother, brother and sisters, loving hands placed all that was mortal of the greatest tragedian that ever lived in America."

Nothing need be added to this. The dead man's will was found to contain several bequests to old friends

and servants, and an elaborate scheme by which his fortune, in the hands of trustees, was to be applied to the erection and support of a retreat for aged actors, to be called "The Edwin Forrest Home." The idea had been long in his mind, and careful directions were drawn up for its practical working; but the trustees found themselves powerless to realize fully the hopes and wishes of the testator. A settlement had to be made with the divorced wife, who acted liberally towards the estate; but the amount withdrawn seriously crippled it, as it was deprived at once of a large sum of ready money. An informality in the drawing of the will involved the trustees in trouble, under the laws of the State of New York, in which much of the property lay; large fees to lawyers still further hampered them; and their income at present is insufficient, without aid, to further the testator's purpose, while a claimant has arisen to demand possession of the estate on the ground of propinquity of blood.

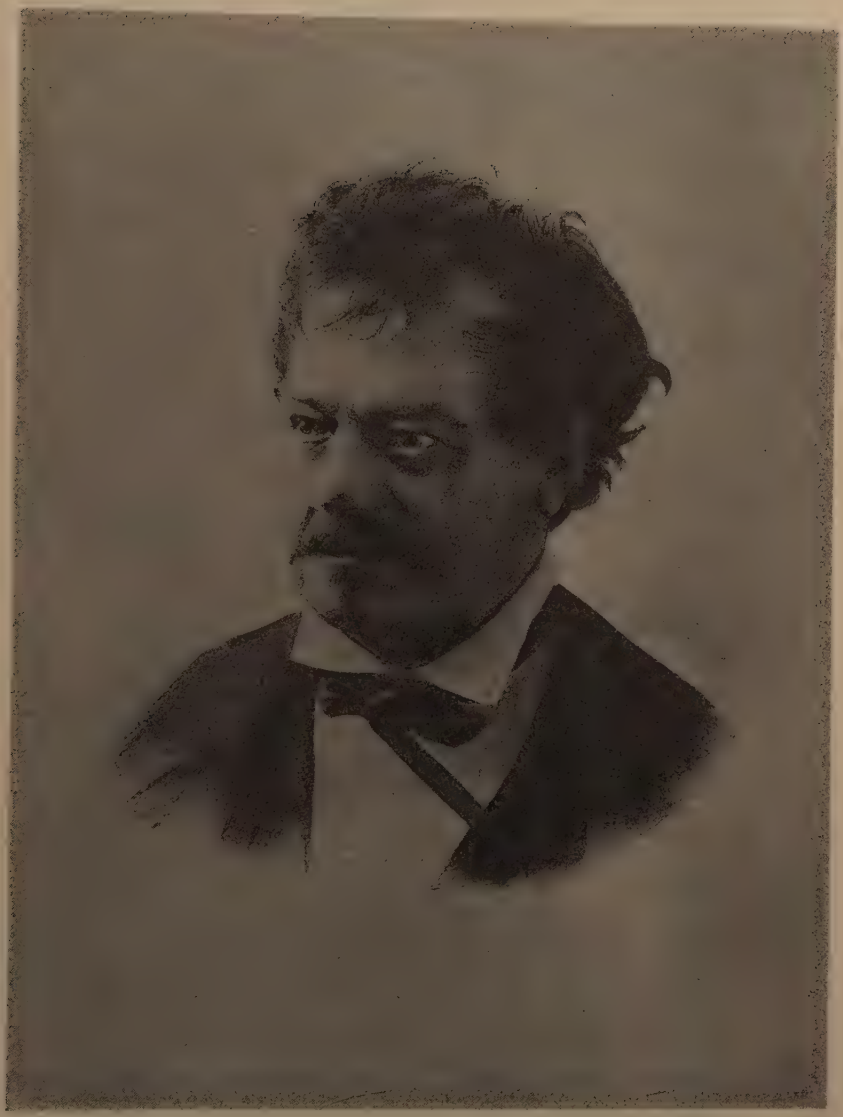
Thus the great ambition of the tragedian to be a benefactor to his profession was destined to come almost to naught. No sooner had the giant frame been laid in the grave than it was shown to the world how utterly vain and useless had been his accumulation of wealth for the laudable purposes for which he had designed it. Of this happily little he recks now. He has parted with all the cares of life, and has at last found rest. Half a century before, in that very city where his ashes now repose, he had breasted the world with his mighty frame, his still mightier purpose; but the weary years had gradually worn away the one, failure and bit-

ter experience had done their work with the other; and as his friends stood about the open grave on that dismal winter's day, they looked down upon the mortal part of one who was not only the last of his race and his name, but who had left nothing of import behind him but his glorious reputation, as the first and the greatest of American Tragedians.

CHAPTER XIII.

EPILOGUE.

POSTERITY deals summarily with the fame of the actor. He must reap his reward while living, and solace himself with the present applause which his audiences grant; for to him posthumous glory is denied. He leaves nothing but the memory of his work behind him. The breath of his fame evaporates in the shouts which make the rafters ring, living a moment, and dying into absolute silence. In all the sister arts the wealth of a dead master's genius is proven in the living effigies by which men may measure his real worth after the creating hand is cold in death. Futurity, however, often rectifies the injustice of contemporary critics; the eloquent canvas, the speaking marble, obtaining the homage refused the living artist. Michael Angelo on one occasion, to gratify the caprice of his royal master, carved an image of snow, on which, perhaps, he expended as much thought as upon his immortal "Moses" or the imperishable Dome of St. Peter's, and which in the eyes of the men of his time was perhaps to live as long as either. Harassed by his fellows in art, persecuted by the malice of his enemies, with few smiles to lighten his burden, few hands to encourage him, no



filial devotion to sustain him, this grandest hero of the Middle Ages heard little more than the echo of the fame which was to surround his memory in later years. Klopstock, feeling too keenly the neglect of his own time, dedicated his "Messiah" to posterity. Beethoven, whose heavenly harmonies were drawn from a soul harrowed by the ingratitude of the world about him, felt that his compositions fell upon ears almost as deaf as his own; and died in poverty, with no consolation but the faith that whole nations yet unborn would chant his praises in his own immortal music. The living estimation denied to the poet Keats has been more than rebuked by the influence his works are now acknowledged to have had upon the poets of the Victorian age, when his "Endymion" is crowned with the laurel refused to him. But while the ingratitude of contemporaries has embittered the lives of poets, painters, sculptors, composers, and authors, the theatre has been ringing with the applause granted to some gifted actor whose very name now is but a dim and shadowy memory. His fellow-artists live in their works; by their works, as enduring as marble, are they known: the actor's work dies with him; his image is carved in snow.

Æschines was not only a great statesman, but a great actor. When sent by his countrymen to Philippi, he was compelled to obtain leave from the theatres in Asia Minor, and was reluctantly spared to the state. The matchless art which guided him in the performance of the heroic characters created by Æschylus and Sophocles is now a matter of tradition only; but the

reply to Demosthenes, the records of his public acts, live in the state papers of his time. In all Italy no bust of Roscius can be found, no transcript of those features upon which in the days of his glory the Romans looked with so much pride and pleasure. The passing breath of public adulation, the shout of the populace, the regard of a corrupt court, were the only rewards of the most gifted actor of the Roman world in the days of Cicero and of Cæsar. The art museums are crowded with the effigies of soldiers and of statesmen, but no sculptured marble preserves to us the form of the greatest of Roman tragedians. In the hollow triumphs of a Roman holiday with the gladiator and the chariot-rider, the dancer and the mime, he heard the only praises he was ever to receive; and he has passed into history with no enduring evidences of his powers by which he may be estimated by posterity.

Of Richard Burbage how little is known. Aided by the destroying fury of Puritanism, the march of Time has obliterated even the simplest record of a life passed in the formation of our English drama. Standing side by side with Shakspere, his friend and manager, he shares with him the injustice which posterity has done his fame as an actor, and is denied, of course, the glory given to the poet and the dramatist. No pen can show us the man as he did his life's work in that now historic theatre, no hand trace for us the creator of *Hamlet* and *Othello*, the glorious forerunner of Betterton, Garrick, and Kean. The oblivion into which the fame of England's first great player has sunk still shrouds the personal history of her greatest poet. To-

gether, in the region of mere conjecture, wander the images of Shakspere and Burbage, — the one living now only in his glorious writings, while to the other is denied a habitation, almost a name.

While posterity, however, is shown to be indifferent to the professional merits of the actor, it regards with peculiar and lasting interest all details of his non-professional life. Volumes have been written, and are still eagerly read, relating to the personal career of old stage favorites, whose services and performances on the boards can now be judged by no valid comparison. In all generations the memoirs of the player who has honored his calling have been among the most cherished of biographical books. From Garrick the actor we turn fondly to Garrick the man and the citizen; and, while we can fix in our minds no proper idea of his genius behind the footlights, we can justly admire him as a scholar, a poet, and a gentleman, adorning the age in which he lived, and held in the most affectionate remembrance by his contemporaries, who have recorded his worth. We can find in our fancy no place for Betterton the actor; but the friend of Pope, the pure and cultured student who assisted him by his example in raising the depraved stage of the Restoration into the region where even a Jeremy Collier could respect it, the citizen who added grace to his profession by his unblemished reputation, for him we must have a grateful and enduring memory. To the Kembles and the younger Kean we turn with respect, as to men who filled their high places with credit, and who left their calling nobler than they found it. Even those who denied

the genius of Macready honored the man who called Dickens, Forster, Bulwer, Talfourd, Tennyson, and Rogers, friend; and his last years at Cheltenham, with their peace and rest, were the fitting close of a life personally well spent in the strict observance of duty done "ever in the great Task-master's eye."

No man knew better the history of the drama than Edwin Forrest. No actor tasted so early the sweets of popular renown, no man so rapidly sprang into popular favor, and no one in modern times so long held his high rank in his profession undisturbed. He almost discounted all claims upon posterity in the munificent rewards of his contemporaries. Blessed as man has seldom been with fine personal qualities for a calling demanding so much in the way of physical attractions, with a matchless voice, an industrious nature, and an ambitious spirit, he seemed born to regenerate the stage. He had only to supplement his gifts with the refined study and culture which embellish and crown such royal possessions, to have realized all that the most ambitious could wish. No life is so illustrative of the necessity of character in the working out of great fame, in the proper utilizing of great gifts, as his. Had his patience and humility been equal to his other qualities, we should have found united in him the private life of a Betterton with his own undeniable genius. No man knew the right way better than he; no man, when his imperious will was opposed, more often stubbornly chose the wrong. At the very moment when his reputation seemed the most assured, it received its death-blow, and at his own hands. If his headstrong

obstinacy had but yielded to the importunity of his real friends and his own better judgment at the most momentous periods of his life, had he studied the effect of his conduct upon the then struggling American drama, had he shown less care for his pride and more for his art, there would have been no divorce trial, no riot in Astor Place. The one would have been quietly settled without public scandal, the other prevented by the power which he could have exercised over his injudicious admirers. The first gave to his private life a notoriety which will ever be remembered to his discredit; the last identified him in his professional life with the passions of a mob, and served to increase the prejudice already felt in refined society against his too emphatic democracy. The high place to which Forrest's genius had raised him demanded some sacrifice on his part of his personal feeling; and in his lamentable hastiness he outraged good taste and public opinion, and sullied his own good name.

These two unhappy events force themselves into prominence whenever his name is recalled. They cost him many friends, and sowed the seeds of suspicion and distrust in a nature generous in the extreme in many respects, although harsh and unforgiving. During the later years of his life he lived in a very narrow social circle, surrounded by a few tried companions, but their diminished numbers too often gave a pang of sorrow to an already wounded heart. His nobler qualities were not so well known as they should have been. He showed a strong interest in all young actors who labored studiously for advancement in their profession.

His demeanor was frequently dictatorial and rude, but only where his prejudices were involved. He treated with good feeling and justice his fellow-players, save when his personal dislikes were particularly strong, and then he condemned without reason. He spoke often of the really great actor as comparable only with the loftiest of mankind, thinking, perhaps, at the time, of the greatness he himself had achieved, and of which he was naturally proud. His opinion of his own performances was high, and he placed himself on a parallel with the most prominent men in all walks of life. On one occasion, discoursing of certain severe newspaper criticisms upon the conduct of Mr. Lincoln at some important crisis of his career, he indignantly denounced the freedom with which great reputations were sometimes assailed by the press, and added that this particular attack was only equalled by the audacity with which journalistic striplings had condemned his own performances. It could have no more effect upon Abraham Lincoln, he declared, than similar criticism could affect Edwin Forrest; for he must regard the journalist who could, for instance, find fault with his third act of "Othello" as a man fit only for the lunatic asylum, or an ignominious expulsion down his own back-stairs.

Forrest was a great lover of books. All his life he had been an extensive reader, and he often asserted that the successful actor could not help acquiring a liberal education in the course of his work. He was an excellent illustration of his own theory in this respect, for he gained all he ever had in the way of knowledge after he

entered the theatre. For Nature in all her moods he had a profound love and reverence, but none for dogma or the authority of the church. He loved his friends. He hated his enemies. A lie to him was the most unpardonable of offences. He had strong passions, and they often became his master. In frame he was a giant, and he had many of the weaknesses of character that so often attend magnificent physical gifts.

Forrest lived to see the reign of melodrama and of sensationalism. The hero of the old classical arena stood face to face with the light-armed, naked-bodied intruder who had for a time won the popular regard. He fell before it, and his own efforts were neglected and forsaken by the admirers of an unnamable outrage upon the stage of any reputable theatre.

Forrest's greatest Shaksperean parts were *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Coriolanus*. The first grew mellow and rich as the actor grew in years, while it still retained much of its earlier force. His *Othello* suffered with the decline of his faculties, although his clear conception of all he did was apparent to the end in his acting of every one of his parts. *Coriolanus* died with him, the last of all the Romans. He was greatest, however, in such *rôles* as *Virginius*, *William Tell*, and *Spartacus*. Here his mannerisms of gait and of utterance were less noticeable than in his Shaksperean characters, or were overlooked in the rugged massiveness of the creation. *Hamlet*, *Richard*, and *Macbeth* were out of his temperament, and added nothing to his fame; but *Richelieu* is said to have been one of his noblest and most impressive performances. He was in all things marked and dis-

tinctive. His obtrusive personality often destroyed the harmony of the portrait he was painting, but in his inspired moments, which were many, his touches were sublime. He passed over quiet scenes with little elaboration, and dwelt strongly upon the grand features of the characters he represented. His *Lear*, in the great scenes, rose to a majestic height, but fell in places almost to mediocrity. His art was unequal to his natural gifts. He was totally unlike his great contemporary and rival, Macready, whose attention to detail gave to every performance the harmony of a perfect work.

Forrest's voice, as has been said, was powerful and musical, and he used it with marvellous effect. He never over-excited himself or tired his listener. He displayed at each rising stage of a great passion new capabilities, and when it seemed that his wonderful strength could bear no more, he electrified his audiences by a greater and still more powerful outburst of eloquence. His tenderness lay in the tones of his voice, the almost womanly sweetness of his utterance. His grief was manly, never maudlin or soulless. His presence was commanding and impressive beyond that of any actor of his time. During his life he was surrounded by imitators, who caught only the imperfections, the outward manner of the man; but he founded no school, he created no style of acting by which his followers might perpetuate his methods; and, take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again.

The great actor sleeps. He has gone to his last account, leaving behind him a noble charity for his brothers' good, which he failed to perfect before he

died; and a fame such as no American may hope to rival in our generation, the fame of a life-work, if not altogether well done, still done as best his nature ordered: a reputation for noble manliness of purpose, for loyalty of soul. Personally and professionally, he was the giant of the native American stage.

This memoir may fitly close with an illustrative anecdote of the great actor. Towards the end of his professional career he was playing an engagement at St. Louis. He was very feeble in health, and his lameness was a source of great anxiety to him. Sitting at a late supper in his hotel one evening, after a performance of "King Lear," with his friend, J. B. McCullough, of the *Globe Democrat*, that gentleman remarked to him, "Mr. Forrest, I never in my life saw you play *Lear* so well as you did to-night." Whereupon the veteran almost indignantly replied, rising slowly and laboriously from his chair to his full height, "*Play Lear!* what do you mean, sir? I do not *play Lear!* I *play Hamlet*, *Richard*, *Shylock*, *Virginius*, if you please; but, by God, sir! I *am Lear!*"

Nor was this wholly imaginative. Ingratitude of the basest kind had rent his soul. Old friends were gone from him, new friends were but half-hearted. His hearthstone was desolate. The public to whom he had given his best years was becoming impatient of his infirmities. The royalty of his powers he saw by degrees torn from his decaying form. Other kings had arisen on the stage, to whom his old subjects now showed a reverence once all his own. The mockery of his diadem only remained.

A wreck of the once proud man who had despised all weaknesses and had ruled his kingdom with imperial sway, he now stood alone. Broken in health and in spirit, deserted, forgotten, unkinged, he might well exclaim, "I *am* LEAR!"

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